This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

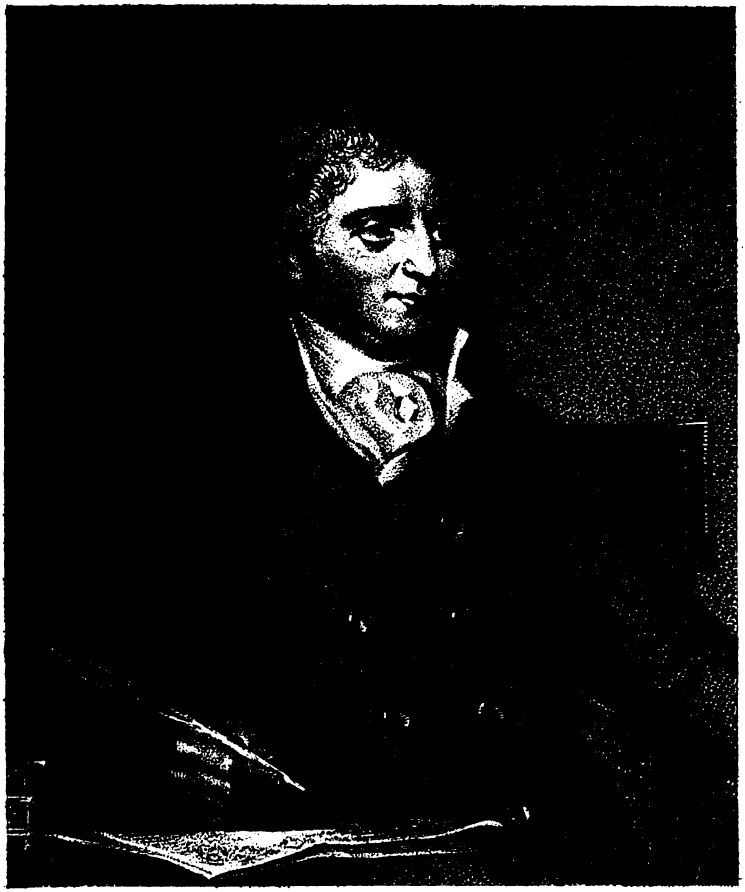
+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

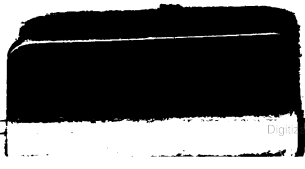


Essays, biographical, critical, and historical,

Nathan Drake

Digitized by Google

THIS BOOK
FORMS PART OF THE
ORIGINAL LIBRARY
OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
BOUGHT IN EUROPE
1838 TO 1839



Digitized by Google

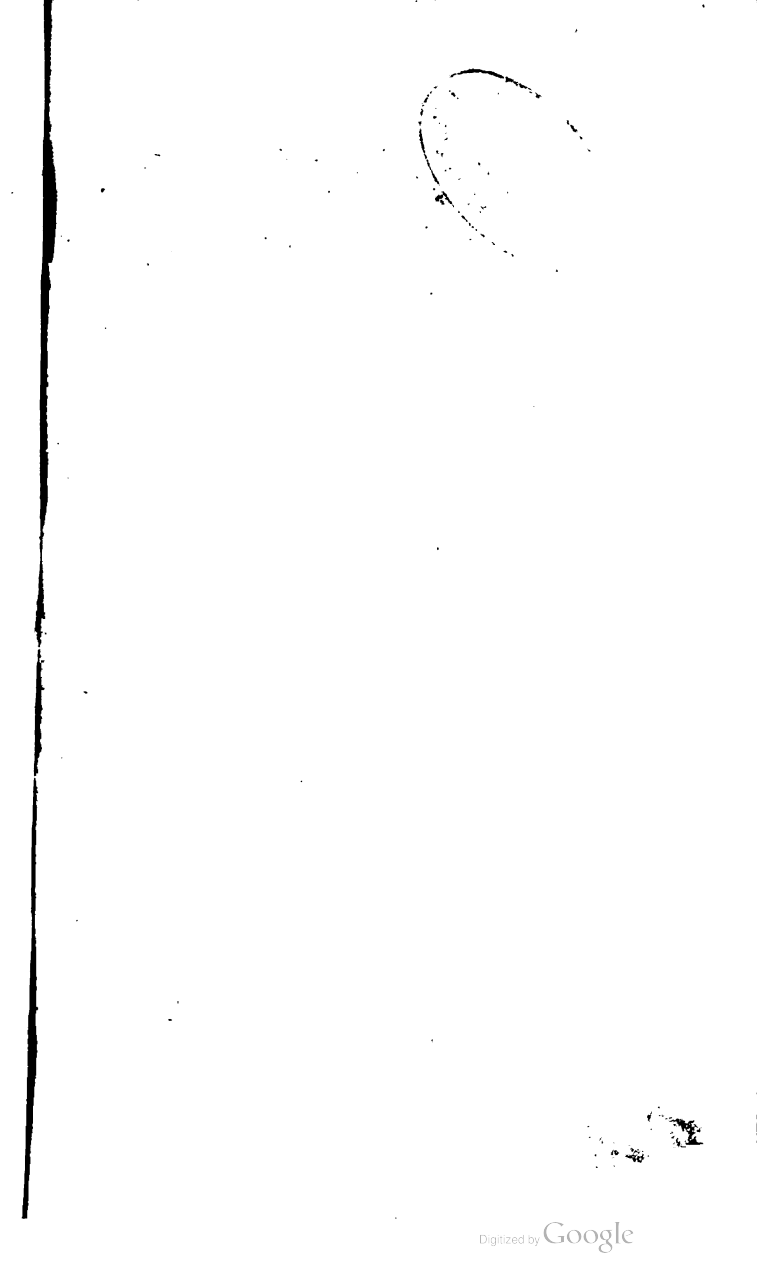
820,9
D76
1814

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

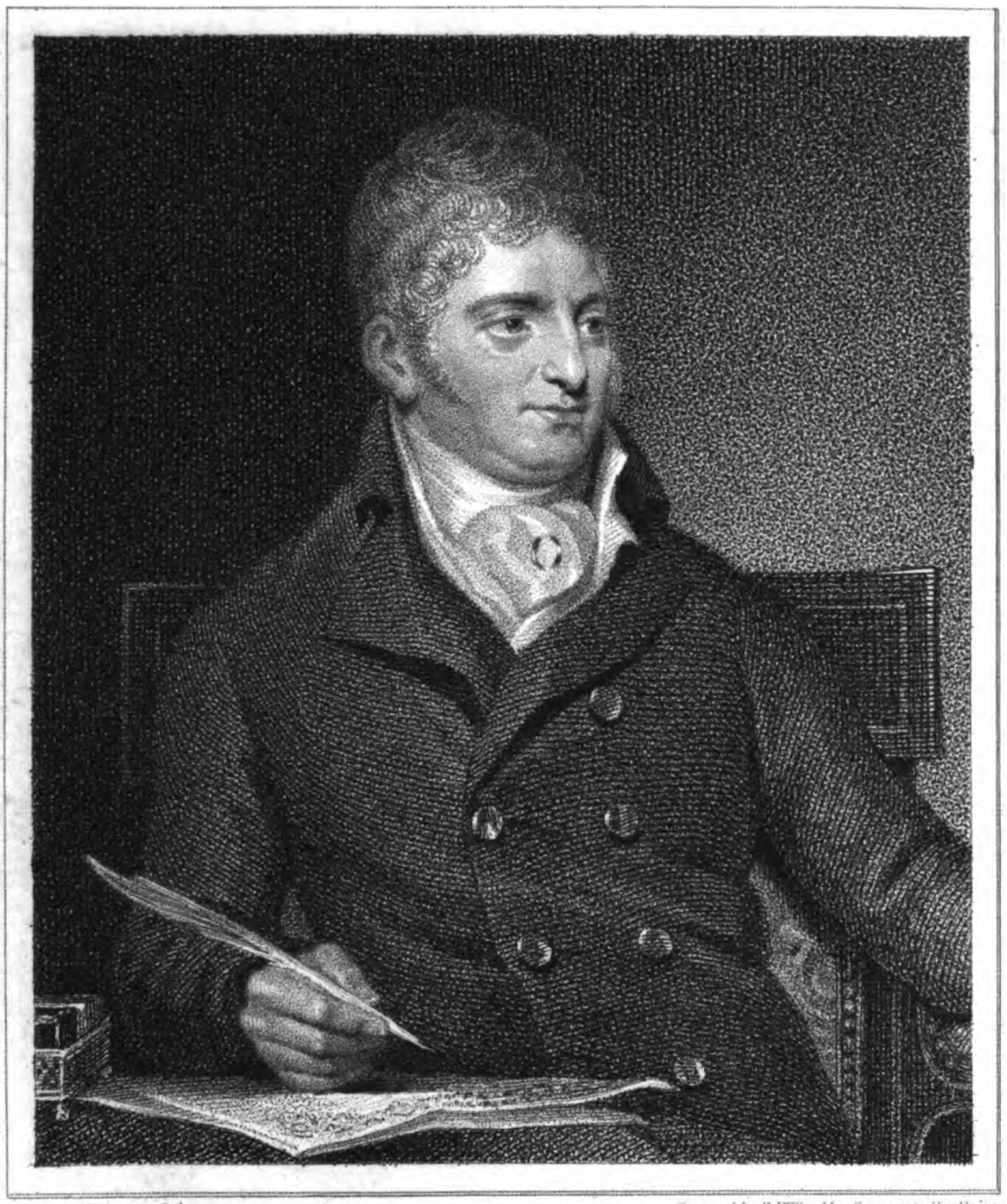
Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google


Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google



Painted by H.Thomson,R.A. *Engraved by P.W.Tomkins, Engraver to Her Majesty.*

NATHANIEL HOWARD.

Published [illegible]

UNIV. OF MICH.

Digitized by Google

18-283

3 1 5

ESSAYS,

BIOGRAPHICAL, CRITICAL, AND HISTORICAL,

ILLUSTRATIVE OF THE

TATLER, SPECTATOR,

AND

GUARDIAN.

BY NATHAN DRAKE, M.D.

AUTHOR OF LITERARY HOURS, &c.

Αγαθης αγαθοις αντεξεταξειν.

Dionysius Halicarnassensis.

IN THREE VOLUMES.—VOL. I.

THE SECOND EDITION.

LONDON:

Published by SUTTABY, EVANCE, and FOX, STATIONERS' COURT, LUDGATE-STREET;

And SHARPE and HAILES, PICCADILLY.

1814.

Digitized by Google

J. Seeley, Printer,
Buckingham.

Digitized by Google

CONTENTS.

VOL. I.

Page

PREFACE 1

PART I.

ESSAY. General Observations on Periodical Writing, its Merits and Utility, and on the State of Literature and Manners in this Island at the Commencement of the Tatler, in 1709 15

PART II.

ESSAY 1. Biographical Sketch of Steele... 41

ESSAY 2. Observations on the Style of Steele 185

ESSAY 3. On the Taste and Critical Abilities of Steele 203

ESSAY 4. On the Invention, Imagery, and Pathos of Steele 230

Digitized by Google

Page

Essay 5. On Steele's Humour and Delineation of Character..... 251

Essay 6. On the Ethics and Morality of Steele..... 276

PART III.

Essay 1. Biographical Sketch of Addison.. 292

Digitized by Google

PREFACE.

It was my wish, when entering upon the execution of the following work, to adopt a plan which, in its arrangement, should be productive of novelty, and in its various branches, fertile in literary discussion; which should, in fact, though occasionally digressive in its parts, preserve a perspicuous unity of design, and a mutual subserviency in all its departments.

I have therefore, urged by the hope of succeeding, in some degree, in this

Digitized by Google

arduous attempt, divided my volumes into *five parts*, and again subdivided these into *Essays*.

The *first* part, embracing but one essay, and which may be considered as introductory to the whole, contains,

General observations on periodical writing, its merit and utility, and on the state of literature and manners in this island at the commencement of the *Tatler*, in 1709.

The *second* part, including every thing relative to Sir Richard Steele, is branched into six essays.

1. A Biographical Sketch of Steele.
2. Observations on his Style.
3. On his Taste and Critical Abilities.

Digitized by Google

4. On his Invention, Imagery, and Pathos.
5. On his Delineation of Character and on his Humour.
6. On his Ethics and Morality.

The *third* part also, which is employed on the character and writings of Addison, receives a similar arrangement, viz.

1. A Biographical Sketch of Addison.
2. Observations on, and Specimens of, the Progress of English Style, and on the Style of Addison in particular.
3. On the Origin and Progress of English Criticism, and on the Critical Abilities and Taste of Addison.
4. On his Humour and Comic Painting.
5. On the Introduction of Oriental Imagery into Europe, and on the Fable, Imagery, and Allegory of Addison.
6. On the Moral Tendency of his Periodical Writings.

Digitized by Google

The *fourth* part, consisting of three essays, is occupied by,

Biographical and Critical Sketches of the Occasional Correspondents of Steele and Addison;

And the *fifth* and *last* part delivers

Observations on the Effects of the Tatler, Spectator, and Guardian, on the Taste, Literature, and Morals of the Age.

To preserve the requisite unity in a plan of this kind, I have thought it necessary to place Steele and Addison very conspicuously on the fore-ground. They were the fathers and founders of

Digitized by Google

Periodical Writing; and round them, as round two mighty orbs, must be arranged in just order, and with a subserviency due from inferior luminaries, the numerous literati who, however slightly in degree, have contributed to heighten the lustre of the system to which they were attached.

In pursuance of this idea, I have given the Lives of Steele and Addison upon a scale more extended and diffuse than has hitherto been attempted, collecting from every quarter, and from a multitude of books, a considerable mass of scattered information, much of which had not been previously combined in any *single* narrative. With this collection of facts, I have endeavoured to unite such reflections and inferences

Digitized by Google

as the incidents appeared to suggest; aware that, in biography so well known as that of Steele and Addison, much of the novelty to be hoped for and expected must take its rise from this source.

With regard to the Occasional Correspondents, and who in number amount to more than *thirty*, I have chosen, I flatter myself, the only plan which the limits and nature of my undertaking would admit. To have entered at large into *their* biography would have stript the work of all symmetry, integrity, and proportion; and the lives of Swift, of Pope, and of Young, who contributed so little in quantity to periodical composition, must have contained a body of criticism on productions totally extrin-

Digitized by Google

sic and irrelevant to the subject of illustration. I have dwelt, therefore, at no great length on the biographical part of this division; and, in general, according to the number and importance of the papers of the respective individuals; reserving, with few exceptions, the major portion of each article for that province which more immediately falls in with the unity and spirit of our design —the critical consideration of their contributions.

I trust also that, with a view to consistency and propriety, the criticism employed on the productions of Steele and Addison, bears the same proportion, in length and elaboration, to that expended on the assistant literati, which it is intended the department of biogra-

Digitized by Google

phy should exhibit. It is here, indeed, if any where, that I may possibly be charged with too excursive a flight into the regions of criticism; but such is the important light in which the periodical writers must be contemplated in the annals of English Literature, whether we consider their style, their genius, or their morality, that I am induced to suppose no discussion, however copious, if it lead to a more just and accurate appreciation of their merit, can be unfavourably received.

It was under this conviction, that in the essays on the style and critical powers of Addison, I have ventured to present the reader with views of what had previously been effected in these branches of our literature. Hence the

Digitized by Google

progress of English style and criticism, their gradual improvement, and their obligations to the elegant pen of our author, will, I hope, be evolved in a clear and satisfactory manner.

The introduction of oriental fable, and especially of the fictions of Arabia, into Europe, and this island, appeared to me so intimately blended with a very favourite province of Addisonian literature, as to require little or no apology for a cursory detail of the means which, from an early period, had been employed to create a taste for this wild but interesting imagery. The digression struck me, indeed, as sufficiently warranted by Addison's acknowledged love for these productions, and by the great influence which his example exerted in

Digitized by Google

rendering them still more popular and pleasing.

It has been my endeavour that the commencing and concluding essay should powerfully assist toward binding the parts into a whole; the *former*, after a dissertation on the origin, the merit, and utility of periodical writing, stating the situations of manners and literature in this island, *previous* to the appearance of the Tatler; the *latter*, the salutary effect which this and the two succeeding series of papers ultimately produced on every rank of society, and every department of elegant literature.

Such is the outline of the plan I have adopted; how far it is calculated to

Digitized by Google

answer the purposes for which it was constructed, with what success it has been filled up and supported, and whether its extension to the Rambler, Adventurer, and Idler, would be desirable, must be determined by the opinion of the public.

I cannot conclude this Preface, without adverting to the beauty and accuracy of the edition of the Periodical Writers, which accompanies these Essays; an undertaking on which I feel myself perfectly at liberty to expatiate, it having been entirely and exclusively under the superintendance of *Mr. Sharpe*, to whose taste and indefatigable attention every lover of the fine arts must acknowledge no inconsiderable obligation.

Digitized by Google

It is impossible, indeed, whilst viewing the decorations of the British Classics, to speak but in terms of admiration. Whether we consider the art, the genius, and inventive powers discoverable in the conception and execution of the designs, or the delicacy, the high finish and richness of the engravings, this edition most undoubtedly surpasses any effort, on the same scale, yet produced in this country.

On a work thus conducted, at an expence enormous on the part of the Publisher, and with an energy which not only aims at supporting its primal merit, but looks forward to the attainment of superior excellence in each succeeding volume, I would call the attention of those whose taste and opulence

Digitized by Google

point them out as the patrons of art and elegance.

It becomes the spirit of a great and high-minded nation, whose sons, in defence of liberty and social order, have rushed forward with an enthusiasm unequalled in the annals of glory, to foster, amid the thunder and convulsions of war, the efforts of fancy and of taste—so shall we teach the foe who threatens us with ruin and devastation, with slavery mental and political, that, calm and collected in the tempest, and reposing on her strength, Great Britain looks round with conscious safety; alike resolved to curb the fury of ambition, and to cherish the genius of her isle.

Hadleigh, Suffolk,
Nov. 1, 1804.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

ESSAYS,

BIOGRAPHICAL, CRITICAL, AND HISTORICAL.

PART I.

ESSAY.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS ON PERIODICAL WRITING, ITS MERIT AND UTILITY, AND ON THE STATE OF LITERATURE AND MANNERS IN THIS ISLAND AT THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE TATLER IN 1709.

FEW contrivances have been found more effectual toward correcting the foibles and lighter vices of mankind, or better calculated to diffuse a taste for literature and refinement, than the periodical publication of short essays. To comprehend the intricacies of *speculative* science, or to relish the *elaborate* productions of genius, requires not only the education of many years, but much subsequent leisure through life; and such are the necessary duties assigned to Man, so much of his time is occupied in the mere preservation of existence, that there are not many, even in the

Digitized by Google

most civilized state of society, who, by inheriting property, enjoy an exemption from personal labour adequate to the pursuit; neither among those thus privileged is it common to find many who possess the ability or inclination to improve the opportunities which opulence has bestowed, either in extending the limits of knowledge, or expatiating in the fields of imagination. To every one, however, whatever may be his rank, some portion of leisure is allotted, and it is of infinite importance to the happiness and prosperity of society that that leisure be properly employed.

In a country just rising into consequence by commercial efforts, where, with the exception of a few individuals devoted to an academical or professional life, the higher and middle classes are but little acquainted with the pleasures and advantages of literature, where to form the character of the gentleman no more grammatical knowledge is required than may be found in the common mechanic; it will be in vain that attention is called to philological enquiry or studied exhortation. On men busied in the acquirement of wealth, merely for its own sake, or revelling in the grossest sensualities, no formal display of the value of science, or the beauty and utility of virtue, can be supposed to produce much effect. Under these circumstances it should be our endeavour not to present the solemn

Digitized by Google

disquisition or scholastic tome, but to insinuate, under the garb of entertainment, a relish for and a love of letters, and to meliorate or remove by ridicule those minuter vices and follies on which neither law nor religion has fixed. It was in this stage of society, when refinement and general knowledge had made a very partial progress, that our earliest periodical papers were written; when the chief difficulty was to induce the gay, the thoughtless, and the busy, to read even a short essay. He who would have trembled at the idea of commencing a volume, mustered courage, however, to peruse a single sheet, which terminating the subject discussed, and occupying no greater portion of time than could conveniently be spared during the intervals of business or dissipation, offered attractions which no publication in the general walk of literature had hitherto displayed. To allure those who were not otherwise to be acquired, politics were at first mingled with the miscellaneous matter, until the attention being by various means once gained, and the heart and imagination awakened, all the benevolent purposes which these admirable compositions were intended to effect, were at length happily obtained.

To introduce, therefore, and support a taste for elegant literature; to paint virtue in her most alluring form; to inculcate attention to the decen-

Digitized by Google

cies, proprieties, and minuter graces of domestic life, and to dissipate by well-turned ridicule and humour those fashionable follies and lighter shades of vice which, though apparently trivial, undermine the foundations of our happiness, form the legitimate objects of a periodical paper. That these, however, may produce their full effect, no common rate ability is demanded on the part of the author. To beauty, accuracy, and vivacity of composition, must be added strength of imagination and versatility of style. The tale, the allegory, the vision should relieve or clothe the dryness of didactic precept; and the pages animated by the glow of sentiment, or the brilliancy of description, should be succeeded by the smile of satire, and the pleasantries of comic painting.

Mere fancy and erudition, however exalted or however profound, will be found unequal to the production of a work such as we have now described. The labour of the closet, where taste is not wanting, may indeed accumulate and display with critical acumen the beauties of a Homer or a Virgil, or may raise an original fabric, the offspring of luxuriant imagination; but in vain shall we seek for that intimacy with the human heart, that just discrimination of character, so vitally essential to the popularity and utility of a periodical paper. For these the author must have mixed in the mot-

Digitized by Google

ley world around him, and marked with a penetrating eye the different classes and individuals of mankind, in order to select with judgment, for censure or for praise, their more prominent features, and with a view toward furnishing that dramatic form which alone can give birth to the exquisite conceptions of humour.

A series of papers thus constituted, and forming a whole, replete with wit, fancy, and instruction, has been proved by long experience not only the most useful but the most interesting and popular of publications. Each sex, every rank, and every stage of society have been alike amused and benefited by these productions. Courtesy, etiquette, and dress, as well as morals, criticism, and philosophy, have learnt to obey their dictates, and many important truths, many sage lessons for life, have, by approaching under the disguise of a trivial and fashionable topic, found their way to, and made their due impression upon, those whom no other channel could reach.

Even in the present age, when literature is to a certain degree diffused through almost every department, and when refinement nearly borders upon excess, essays constructed in the original mould still charm. Though the rudeness, the grossness, and improprieties, which called forth the wit or the invective of our early essayists, no longer exist,

there is still a most abundant crop of petty vice and folly, of vanity and affectation, which, though assuming a more polished surface, as loudly demands excision. Our manners too, though somewhat softened down and amalgamated by the progress of civilization, still bear strongly the marks of individual modification, and still furnish to the attentive and experienced observer numerous original and high-wrought characters; whilst, at the same time, the taste for cadence of period and harmony of style, for the luxuries of fiction and the elegancies of critical discussion, now so widely disseminated, presents an ample field for variety and grace. In proof of these remarks it may be observed, that from the first appearance of the Tatler to the present day, no period has been absolutely devoid of periodical essays; and it can with equal justice be affirmed, that they form a most splendid and highly valuable branch of our national literature. The greatest masters of our language, the classical writers of their age, have exerted the noblest efforts of their genius, and afforded us the finest specimens of their composition, whilst employed in the execution of those beautiful designs, which, if considered for a moment in the light of highly-finished pictures, how vividly do they express the style and manner of their respective artists! In Addison we discern the amenity and

Digitized by Google

ideal grace of Raphael; in Johnson the strength and energy of Michael Angelo; in Hawkesworth the rich colouring and warmth of Titian; the legerity and frolic elegance of Albani in the productions of Moore, Thornton, and Colman; the pathetic sweetness of Guido in the draughts of Mackenzie; and the fertility and harmonious colouring of Annibale Caracci in the vivid sketches of Cumberland.

From such an assemblage of diversified excellence, he must be fastidious indeed who receives not the most pleasurable emotions; and incapable of instruction, if he leaves it not a better nor a wiser man. The grave, the gay, the old, the young, will here find something to arrest attention, and to awaken curiosity; to excite the smile of harmless mirth, or draw forth the tear of pity; to illuminate the page of ancient times, or to invigorate the pursuit of virtue. Such is the useful variety with which these writings teem! "When I hold a volume of these Miscellanies," observes an elegant author, "and run over with avidity the titles of its contents, my mind is enchanted, as if it were placed among the landscapes of Valais, which Rousseau has described with such picturesque beauty. I fancy myself seated in a cottage, amid those mountains, those vallies, those rocks, encircled by the enchantments of optical illusion. I look and

Digitized by Google

behold at once the united seasons. 'All climates in one place, all seasons in one instant.' I gaze at once on a hundred rainbows, and trace the romantic figures of the shifting clouds. I seem to be in a temple dedicated to the service of the Goddess of VARIETY." *

The invention of a paper calculated for general instruction and entertainment, abounding in elegant literature, appearing periodically, and forming a whole under an assumed name and character, is, without doubt, to be ascribed to this country, and confers on it no small degree of honour. The TATLER presented to Europe in 1709 the first legitimate model. Some years previous indeed to the publication of this work there had appeared several political, controversial, and theological periodical papers, the offspring of faction and polemics, insulated, devoid of character, unity, or sound literature, and which seem to have been founded, with scarcely an improvement, upon the common newspapers of the day. As early as the reigns of James and Charles the First these vehicles of political information became known, and probably owe their origin to the Dutch, as in Carew's Survey of Cornwall, page 126, published in 1602, the *Mercurius Gallo-belgicus*, a Dutch newspaper, is

* D'Israeli's Miscellanies, p. 22.

Digitized by Google

mentioned. This example was speedily followed by successive English Mercuries, which appeared under the titles of *Mercurius Aulicus*, *Rusticus*, *Civicus*, *Publicus*, *Politicus*, &c. multiplying during the prevalence of the civil war when party and prejudice were at their height. These were succeeded in 1679 by the "Observator" of L'Estrange, a periodical paper, written with the view of defending the King and his Court against the charge of popery. It reached three volumes folio, and was dropped in 1687. Near seventeen years elapsed before another attempt was made on a similar plan, the "Rehearsals" of Charles Lesley commencing only in 1704. They were published at first once, afterwards twice a week, for the space of seven years, were written in the form of dialogue, and were entirely confined to the state of public affairs. Contemporary with this production of Lesley came forward, under a periodical dress, and of a kind far superior to any thing which had hitherto appeared, the "Review" of Daniel De Foe, a man of undoubted genius, and who, deviating from the accustomed route, had chalked out a new path for himself. The first number of this paper was printed on the nineteenth of February, 1704, in quarto, and was repeated every Saturday and Tuesday until March, 1705, when, from the encouragement it received,

Digitized by Google

Thursday was added to the former days of publication, and thus it continued to visit the public thrice a week until its termination in May, 1713, forming, at its decease, nine thick volumes in quarto. The chief topics were, as usual, news foreign and domestic, and politics; to these, however, were added the various concerns of trade; and to render the undertaking more palatable and popular, he, with much judgment, instituted what he termed, perhaps with no great propriety, a "*Scandal Club*," and whose amusement it was to agitate questions in divinity, morals, war, language, poetry, love, marriage, &c.* The introduction of this Club, and the subjects of its discussion, it is obvious, approximate the Review much nearer than any preceding work to our first classical model. Yet borne down by the rude mass of temporary and uninteresting matter, defective in unity of design and delineation of character, it appears, notwithstanding its more varied form, to have soon sunk into oblivion; and perhaps in the present day, as a late biographer has conjectured, a complete set of De Foe's Reviews is no longer in existence.

Such were the abortive attempts at *periodical* composition before Steele had planned his admir-

* Vide Life of De Foe by Chalmers, p. 21. 22. 72. 73.

Digitized by Google

able papers. To correct ludicrous folly, however, by ridicule, to regulate the decencies and duties of mutual intercourse and conversation, to abash vice, to encourage literature, and to attain variety by multiplicity of subject, had been the aim of many writers in various nations long anterior to the birth of the Tatler. These productions were either dissertations, dialogues, or unconnected essays, published in volumes, and totally wanting that peculiar form and association, that dramatic cast and union which have rendered the genuine periodical paper so singularly interesting. Yet as the views of these writers in the formation of their works were, in many respects, similar to those which immortalized an Addison or a Steele, were not unfrequently productive of the best effects, and may have furnished numerous data and hints to their more polished successors, it will be necessary, ere we proceed, and in order fully to estimate the originality of the periodical authors, to notice, in a cursory way, the labours of these previous Essayists.

Notwithstanding the few specimens which have descended to us from the wreck of ancient literature, it would appear from the Preface of Aulus Gellius, that they delighted in miscellaneous composition. He has enumerated no less than twenty-nine titles of works of this description then existing among the Greeks and Romans; and if their

Digitized by Google

contents in any degree corresponded with the inviting sound of many of the appellations chosen to distinguish their pretensions, it is greatly to be regretted that time has not spared them. "Some of these," says Gellius, "were called 'The Muses,' others 'Sylvæ:' one man calls his book 'Minerva's Robe,' another, 'The Horn of Amalthea.' One is termed 'Honey-combs,' another 'Pastures,' another '*My own* Readings,' another '*Ancient* Readings,' another 'Flowrets,' another 'Inventions.' This man names his work 'Lights,' that 'Tapestries,' others are called 'Pandects,' 'Helicon,' 'Problems,' 'Manuals,' 'Small Arms;' some also are stiled 'Memorials,' 'Practical Hints,' 'Leisure Amusements,' and 'Lessons.' We meet also with 'Natural History,' 'Various History,' 'The Parterre,' 'The Orchard,' and 'Common Places;' many have called their books, 'Miscellanies;' nay, some have been stiled 'Moral Epistles,' others 'Epistolary or Mixed Questions,' with various other appellations."* To these we may add the "Attic Nights" of the author of the catalogue just given; which, though sometimes too philological and abstruse for general readers, yet abound with instruction, entertainment, and curious enquiry. The latter part of his preface may with propriety be addressed to

* Beloe's Aulus Gellius, Author's Preface, p. 4.

Digitized by Google

all who not only attempt the perusal of the Attic Nights, but who approach, without due qualification of head and heart, any effusions of genius and taste. "It will be far better," he remarks, "for such as have neither enjoyed pleasure nor bestowed pains in reading and writing, but who are immersed in scenes of riot, or the cares of business, to go their way from these *Nights*, and seek out for themselves other amusements. It is an old proverb, 'A jay has no concern with music, nor a hog with perfumes;' but that the ill-humour and invidiousness of certain ill-taught people may be still more exasperated, I shall borrow a few verses from a chorus of Aristophanes; and what he, a man of most exquisite humour, proposed as a law to the spectators of his play, I also recommend to the readers of this volume, that the vulgar and unhallowed herd, who are averse to the sports of the muses, may not touch, nor even approach it.—The verses are these:

'Silent be they, and far from hence remove,
By scenes like ours not likely to improve,
Who never paid the honour'd muse her rights,
Who senseless live in wild impure delights;
I bid them once, I bid them twice begone,
I bid them thrice, in still a louder tone:
Far hence depart, whilst ye with dance and song
Our solemn feast, our tuneful nights prolong.' * *

* Beloe's Translation, Preface, p. 8.

Digitized by Google

Italy at an early period produced two writers who acquired great and deserved celebrity by pointing out the path to elegance and urbanity in manners, conversation, and conduct, and by teaching, therefore, how to avoid that barbarity in behaviour and rudeness in language which, probably, more than heavier afflictions, interrupt the felicity of life. "Il Cortigiano," "The Courtier" of BALDASSAR CASTIGLIONE was published in 1528, and was intended to display the politeness which reigned among the higher ranks of society, to render familiar the etiquette of courts, and unfold those arts, those useful and agreeable attentions, so necessary to the companions of princes. Its maxims, reflections, erudition, and beauty of style rendered it a great favourite with the public, and the Italians emphatically term it the "golden book."

To this Court Manual of Castiglione succeeded in a few years a still more useful production, the *Galateo* of JOHN DE LA CASA. This elegant volume had for its object a general system of politeness, or the art of living in the world, and consequently became interesting to every individual. It was soon established as a code throughout Europe, and was naturalized in various languages.

France in the same century gave birth to the celebrated MICHAEL DE MONTAIGNE, whose works have been remarkable favourites, and held in high

Digitized by Google

esteem. His essays were published in 1580, and certainly exhibit great knowledge of mankind. There is likewise a simplicity and *naïvete* in his style, which shed over all his compositions a peculiar charm, and which strongly attract and interest the reader. He is, however, too much of an egotist, and is too frequently unguarded and indecent in his expressions.

Rather better than a century after the appearance of Montaigne, LA BRUYERE conferred fresh honour on his country. "The Characters or Manners of this Age," perhaps once the most popular work among the French, were printed in 1687. They are confessedly an imitation of Theophrastus, whose sketches occupy the prior part of the volume, but exceed their prototype in shrewdness of remark and vivid delineation of character. "Bruyere," observes Dr. Aikin, "had the honour of participating with Moliere in the correction of more follies and indecorums than perhaps any other moralists, ancient or modern. He drew with a bold and strong, and at the same time a fine and delicate, pencil." *

England has to boast of three very valuable writers on Ethics and Morality who preceded our periodical classics. In 1597 the great BACON published his "Essays or Counsels," a collection which displays an intimate knowledge of the human heart,

* Aikin's Biographical Dictionary, vol. ii. p. 341.

Digitized by Google

and evinces the same sagacity and penetration in developing the varied modifications of character and manners which had already astonished the world, by fathoming the profoundest depths of philosophy and science. Though the style of this small volume be not polished, the diction being too often quaint and careless, yet as its subjects, to use the author's own expression, "came home to men's business and bosoms," the circulation was soon great, and it acquired a popularity which no other production of this truly wonderful man ever obtained in his native country.

Though inferior in solidity of remark and comprehension of character and manners to the essays of Bacon, the Miscellanea of TEMPLE, which were first printed in 1672, still attract numerous readers. Their style, which at the æra of their publication could claim the merit of simplicity combined with considerable elegance, has, notwithstanding the progress of refinement and grammatical accuracy, many charms unfaded. Pleasing illustrations on literary, and the utmost suavity of manner and purity of precept on moral, topics, conspire to render these compositions yet favourites with judges of taste and lovers of simplicity.

With a character, I regret to say, very different from the amiable author of the Miscellanea appears our next essayist. In principle bigotted and intolerant, coarse in style, and vehement in

Digitized by Google

invective, we yet owe to COLLIER much amelioration as to the state of public decency and morals. His "Essays upon several Subjects," first printed in 1697, in one volume, 8vo. and afterward extended to three, together with his "Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage," were of essential service, at that dissolute period, to the cause of virtue and decorum. Their deficiencies in composition, however, their antithesis, affectation, and quaintness, and their total want of good taste with regard to selection of language, and harmony of cadence, have, although not devoid of learning, wit, or just sentiment, irretrievably plunged them into oblivion: an event which should teach us how necessary are purity and grace of style to the longevity of any work intended for popular use.

Such were the principal moral essays, and such the periodical works, which preceded the successful effort of Steele. His elegant and useful paper commenced at a period when literature and manners in this island were far distant from the universality and polish which they have since obtained. So widely different indeed was their situation from any thing we are now familiar with, that, in order to place the merit of our early periodical productions in its due light, a slight sketch of their state, as existing in 1709, will,

Digitized by Google

before we enter more at large into our work, be deemed, perhaps, indispensably requisite.

Though the reign of Queen Anne has been generally termed the Augustan age of literature in this kingdom, owing to the co-existence of a few celebrated writers, it is astonishing how little, during the greatest part of that period, was the information of the higher and middle classes of society. To the character of the gentleman, neither education nor letters were thought necessary; and any display of learning, however superficial, was, among the fashionable circles, deemed rudeness and pedantry. "That general knowledge," observes Johnson, "which now circulates in common talk, was then rarely to be found. Men not professing learning were not ashamed of ignorance; and in the female world, any acquaintance with books was distinguished only to be censured."* When we reflect, that to express contempt for all literary acquirement was then a certain proof of gentility, and ignorance the characteristic of superior station, a statement which, I believe, previous to the publication of the Tatler, is nearly correct, we ought to hesitate in assigning the epithet of Augustan to this era of our history. We should recollect that two-thirds of the reign of Anne were en-

* Johnson's Life of Addison—Lives of the Poets, vol. ii.

Digitized by Google

tirely occupied by politics; that the struggles of faction, the inveterate contentions of the Whigs and Tories, banished for many years, even among the learned, almost all attention to useful and elegant pursuits; and that the commencement of taste, and the diffusion of knowledge, may be dated from the well-timed efforts of Steele and Addison, efforts which illuminated but the latter days of Anne, and were independent of any encouragement from the throne. From this time only has the public mind been powerfully excited to intellectual emulation, and gradually has it acquired that polish and intimacy with literary subjects which distinguish the present age. It is solely indeed to a nation that has long cherished a strong relish for literature in all its departments, whose taste is correct and pure, and which fosters in her bosom every rising genius, that the title of Augustan can be given, and not to the casual appearance of a few luminaries, surrounded by wastes of interminable darkness.

That extension of mental light, which was first happily effected by our periodical essayists, and which has by degrees led to the brilliancy we now enjoy, had been for a long time intercepted by the dissolute and licentious manners which the court of Charles the Second had introduced, and which continued for several years after the com-

Digitized by Google

mencement of the eighteenth century, though in a less virulent manner, to pollute the channels of public decency, and to choke the germs of intellectual excellence. The theatre, that powerful regulator of the general tone of thinking and of acting, had given birth to a host of writers educated in the school of Charles, and whose talents were employed to vitiate all the sources of morality, to inculcate debauchery as a duty, and to tinge the grossness of vice with the colours of imagination and wit. The dramas of Dryden and Wycherly, of Congreve, of Farquhar, and of Vanbrugh, were the panders of lewdness and profligacy. The usual fine gentleman of their comedy was an unprincipled villain, to whom seduction and adultery, extravagance and ingratitude, and an utter contempt for every thing sacred and serious, are apportioned by the poet as the most splendid ornaments he can bestow upon him, and for the adroit employment of which he is gratified by success, and rewarded by beauty.

The model was but too faithfully copied in real life. He who aspired to reputation in the circles of gallantry assumed that laxity of morals and looseness of manners which he had so frequently contemplated and admired upon the stage; whilst to be known to have devoted any leisure to the duties of devotion, to the study of the classics, or

Digitized by Google

the acquisition of science, would have ruined him for ever in the estimation of the fashionable world. Nor after all these sacrifices at the shrine of dissipation and vice, were the accomplishments and address of these gentlemen entitled to the praise of either refinement or grace. On the contrary, their manners were coarse, their conversation obscene, and their amusements frequently so gross, that bull-baiting, bear-baiting, and prize-fighting, were considered as appropriate recreations for the highest ranks; "they were not only attended," remarks an annotator upon the Tatler, "by butchers, drovers, and great crowds of all sorts of mob, but likewise by dukes, lords, knights, squires, &c. There were seats particularly set apart for the quality, ornamented with old tapestry hangings, into which none were admitted under half a crown at least. "The" neighbourhood "of these amusements" was famous for sheltering thieves, pickpockets, and infamous women; and for breeding bull-dogs."* Their flagrant improprieties in company and conversation are frequently noticed in the Spectator, of which curious examples may be found in Nos. 148, and 242.

If such were the general manners of men, who esteemed themselves exclusively entitled to the

* Tatler with notes, vol. i. ed. 1797.

Digitized by Google

appellations of fashionable and well bred, it might naturally be supposed, that the fair sex were not more seriously disposed, or more solidly accomplished. In the dramatic writings of the day, for the most part a just picture of the times, they are by no means favourably drawn; levity, immodesty, and infidelity, together with an intemperate love of frivolous pursuits, are their usual characteristics. It is to the honour of the sex, however, that we can with truth call these draughts highly overcharged, and in a great measure the caricatures of a licentious and debauched imagination. At a period, indeed, when literature was so little diffused, and when to read with fluency, and spell with correctness were, among the ladies, deemed rare and important acquisitions, much information or acquired knowledge in the female world could not be expected, and one of the best educated ladies of her day, of the first taste and understanding, is represented by Addison as exclaiming, "You men are writers, and can represent us women as unbecoming as you please in your works, while we are unable to return the injury;" * an acquiescence in, and confession of, inability, to which the accomplished women of the present day are no longer under the necessity of submitting.

* Spectator, vol. i. No. 11.

Digitized by Google

The moral character of the females of Addison's time was, in truth, far superior to that of the other sex, and then, as now, religion and virtue found in their bosoms an asylum. The description, indeed, which the Spectator has given of their employments and usual mode of life, without doubt called for reformation, which was shortly afterwards obtained through the medium of his elegant and instructive admonitions. "Their amusements," says he, "seem contrived for them, rather as they are women, than as they are reasonable creatures; and are more adapted to the sex, than to the species. The toilet is their great scene of business, and the right adjusting of their hair the principal employment of their lives. The sorting of a suit of ribands is reckoned a very good morning's work; and if they make an excursion to a mercer's or a toy-shop, so great a fatigue makes them unfit for any thing else all the day after. Their more serious occupations are sewing and embroidery, and their greatest drudgery the preparation of jellies and sweetmeats."* After this picture, I am afraid not exaggerated, of the frivolous consumption of time, let it not be forgotten that he concludes by declaring he knew many ladies in an exalted

* Spectator, vol. i. No. 10.

Digitized by Google

sphere, who joined all the beauties of the mind to the ornaments of dress.

After this sketch of the national manners, and of the low state of literature among the people at large, during the chief part of the reign of Anne, should we pause to consider what were really the merits of those who professed the acquirements of study, the authors of the same period we shall find, I apprehend, notwithstanding the examples of the preceding century, of a Dryden, a Temple, and a Tillotson, that their language was, in general, unharmonious, and inaccurate, clogged with barbarisms, provincial vulgarisms, and cant phraseology, and that with the exception of Swift, whose composition was for that age comparatively pure and correct, we possessed scarcely a specimen of good style, from the death of Tillotson in 1694 to the appearance of the Tatlers.* One great cause of this defalcation, as hath been hinted before, is to be attributed to the warmth of political contest, which at that time universally agitating and heating the minds of men, withdrew their attention from every

* I should here, perhaps, have excepted also Daniel De Foe, whose prose works, though not elegant, possessed the most impressive simplicity. His best production, however, "The Life and Adventures of Robinson Crusoe," was not published until 1719.

Digitized by Google

pleasing topic, and from all consideration as to beauty of thought or felicity of expression, planting in their place the bitter fruits of rancour, envy, and contention. Hence arose that rough, strong, but slovenly diction, which pervaded almost every political pamphlet, and was at length employed on subjects demanding a very different style; nor was a perfect specimen given of what highly polished composition could effect on topics connected with government, until the admirable "Freeholder" was presented to the world, whose simple elegance and humour, adorning the most thorny paths of party dispute, contributed more than weight of argument to its ultimate popularity and success.

Another cause equally powerful in retarding the acquisition of a graceful and perspicuous style, was the little attention which, previous to the tasteful models of Addison, was paid to criticism, and to the grammatical and analogical construction of language. Dryden, it is true, had written his prefaces in a rich and varied, though not a very correct, manner; but they were too desultory and contradictory to afford many just rules for the attainment of an accurate style, and were, indeed, chiefly employed in delivering precepts for epic, dramatic, and satyric composition. English poetry had been enriched by the

Digitized by Google

most splendid monuments of genius, by the dramas of Shakspeare and the epopeia of Milton; but English prose had yet much to acquire from the labours of the critic, the grammarian, and the lexicographer.

The cursory view which we have now taken of the character and merits of periodical writing, and of the general state of literature and manners in our island immediately anterior to the era of Steele and Addison, will, I should hope, impress the reader with a high idea of the value of the instruction which the periodical essay is calculated to afford; and will enable us, likewise, in a succeeding part of our work, clearly to ascertain to what amount we are indebted to these papers for the progress of civilization and the diffusion of learning and morality.*

* I should, perhaps, when mentioning De Foe's Review, have noticed "The British Apollo," a paper published twice a week, by a Society of Gentlemen, and which commenced February 13th, 1708, and completed its career in March 1711, having attained the bulk of three volumes folio. I have seen none of the numbers, but from the residue of the title I should suppose it worthy of little notice; it proceeds as follows, "Curious Amusements for the Ingenious; to which are added the most material occurrences foreign and domestic; and in a pamphlet ascribed to Gay, he mentions that it still recommends itself by deciding wagers at cards." †

† The Present State of Wit.

Digitized by Google

PART II.

ESSAY I.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF STEELE.

RICHARD STEELE, though descended from English parents, was born in Dublin, about the year 1675. His family was very respectable, and a branch of it possessed considerable landed property in the county of Wexford.

Of his father and mother we know little more than that he was a counsellor at law, and secretary to James the first duke of Ormond, and that she was a very beautiful woman, and of a noble spirit. For his parents Steele ever cherished the warmest gratitude and affection; nor is there a more pathetic passage in all his writings, than where he describes his sensation of grief for the loss of his father when yet but quite a child. "The first sense of sorrow I ever knew," says he, "was upon the death of my father, at which time I was not quite five years of age; but was rather amazed at what all the house

Digitized by Google

meant, than possessed with a real understanding why nobody was willing to play with me. I remember I went into the room where his body lay, and my mother sat weeping alone by it. I had my battledore in my hand, and fell a beating the coffin, and calling 'Papa;' for, I know not how, I had some slight idea that he was locked up there. My mother catched me in her arms, and, transported beyond all patience of the silent grief she was before in, she almost smothered me in her embrace; and told me in a flood of tears, 'Papa could not hear me, and would play with me no more, for they were going to put him under ground, whence he could never come to us again.' She was a very beautiful woman, of a noble spirit, and there was a dignity in her grief amidst all the wildness of her transport, which, methought, struck me with an instinct of sorrow, that before I was sensible of what it was to grieve, seized my very soul, and has made pity the weakness of my heart ever since." *

Through the influence of the Duke of Ormond, the patron of the family, and who was at that time one of the governors of the Charter-house school in London, Steele, whilst yet very young, was placed at that seminary, one of the most for-

* Tatler, No. 181.

Digitized by Google

tunate occurrences of his life, as it was here he first met Addison, with whom he formed an intimacy and friendship which death alone had power to interrupt.

From the Charter-house he removed, in 1692, to Merton College, Oxford, and his name stands at the head of the Postmasters admitted that year. His taste for elegant literature was in this place expanded and improved; and so much genius and diligence did he shew in the prosecution of his studies, that he obtained no little celebrity, as a scholar among his fellow collegians. His love for dramatic composition, which he afterwards indulged with so much success and reputation to himself, first discovered itself, while resident at Oxford; here he planned and finished a comedy, for which, as it is natural to suppose, being the first product of his muse, he entertained the highest opinion and regard. With eager hope and expectation he requested the criticism of Mr. R. Parker, one of his bosom companions; nor could he probably have intrusted his piece to better hands. The judgment of this gentleman immediately discovered its defects; his sentence condemned it to oblivion; and it tells highly to the credit of Steele that he submitted to the mortifying decision of his friend without a murmur.

Digitized by Google

It was in the year 1695, that he came before the bar of the public as an author and a poet. The death of Queen Mary furnished him a subject. It was, however, ill adapted to his powers, which were not calculated to shine in the higher departments of poetry, and was a proof that he knew not at that time where the strength of his genius lay. The *Funeral Procession*, for such was the title, has, notwithstanding some claim to notice. It paints the charity and compassion of the Queen, who had liberally relieved her famishing subjects during a dearth of provisions, in a very pleasing light. The following passage, which vividly represents the affliction of the poor for the loss they had sustained by her death, is not unworthy of transcription.

The poor, her first and deepest mourners are,
First in her thoughts, and earliest in her care;
All, hand in hand, with common friendly woe,
In poverty, our native state, they go,
Some, whom unstable errors did engage,
By luxury in youth, to need in age;
Some, who had virgin vows to wedlock broke,
And where they help expected, found a yoke;
Others, who in their want feel double weight,
From the remembrance of a wealthier state.
There mothers walk, who oft despairing stood,
Pierc'd with their infants' eager sobs for food;

Digitized by Google

Then to a dagger run, with threatening eyes,
To stab their bosoms, and to kill their noise.
But in the thought they stopt, their locks they tore,
Threw down their steel, and cruelly forbore.
The innocents their parents' love forgive,
Smile at their fate, nor know they are to live.

About this time our author had unfortunately imbibed a predilection for the army, and had embraced the resolution of joining it the moment he could obtain a suitable appointment. On this occasion he gave the first instance of a disposition which attended him through life, the unqualified preference of his inclination to his interest. Though he received every remonstrance against the scheme on the part of his friends, who had offered all their influence to promote him in a civil line, he was determined to carry his wishes into execution, and, failing to obtain a commission, he entered himself as a private in the horse-guards. The immediate result of this rash step was the loss of his succession to a good estate in Ireland. His relation in the county of Wexford had made him his heir; but on learning the humiliating situation into which he had plunged himself, he instantly altered his will, and left his property to one whom he esteemed more worthy of the donation.

This event was so far from making any proper impression on the mind of Steele, that he ever

Digitized by Google

afterwards reflected upon it with exultation and triumph; and in his answer to Dennis, who had ridiculed his birth and education, he thus, under an assumed character, and in the latter period of his life, replies to the sarcasms of the intemperate critic: "It may, perhaps, fall in my way to give an abstract of the life of this man, whom it is thought thus necessary to undo, and disparage. When I do, it will appear, that when he mounted a war-horse, with a great sword in his hand, and planted himself behind King William the Third, against Lewis XIV. he lost the succession to a very good estate in the county of Wexford, in Ireland, from the same humour which he has preserved ever since, of preferring the state of his mind, to that of his fortune. When he cocked his hat, and put on a broad sword, jack-boots, and shoulder-belt, under the command of the unfortunate Duke of Ormond, he was not acquainted with his own parts, and did not then know he should ever have been able (as he has since appeared to be in the case of Dunkirk,) to demolish a fortified town with a goose-quill."*

In the cause of virtue and of justice, such pertinacity of conduct and dereliction of interest had been praiseworthy; but Steele should have

* Theatre, No. 11, written by Steele, under the name of Sir John Edgar.

Digitized by Google

reflected, and when time and experience had matured his knowledge, it might have been expected from him, that the impulse of youthful enthusiasm, when it breaks through all restraint, and runs headlong toward its own degradation, can admit of no excuse. The only consolatory idea arising from this transaction is, that the future moralist became familiar in a department of life, with which, had he not taken this step, he had probably never been acquainted; we can all testify that his knowledge of the human character, in all its varieties, was ultimately subservient to the best purposes; and though his life may not be termed absolutely exemplary, his pen was ever employed in aiding and promoting the noblest efforts of morality.

It was the business of Steele, however, now that he had chosen his situation, to render it as pleasant to himself and his companions as possible; toward this attainment his openness and frankness of temper, his brilliancy and vivacity of wit, very rapidly led; and in a short time he became such a favourite with the whole regiment, that the officers, wishing to include him in their own body, united all their influence, and the private speedily obtained the honours of an Ensign of the Guards.

This elevation, by opening a road to the indul-

Digitized by Google

gence of every sensual appetite, soon plunged our author into the vortex of dissipation and intemperance. The charms of his conversation were so poignant and inexhaustible, his humour so lively and rich, that no party in this gay circle was relished unless the Ensign formed one of the company. These frequent scenes of revelry and mirth were, however, on the part of Steele, intermingled with the most galling reflections on his weakness and folly, on his perpetual waste of talents and of time.

To render the hours of repentance and contrition more effectual for reformation, and to impress the salutary truths of virtue and religion more strongly on his mind, he employed the intervals snatched from the orgies of voluptuousness in composing, for his own private use, a valuable little Manual, entitled *The Christian Hero.* The effort was, alas! unavailing; for however laudable and well intended were the resolutions of his solitude, the succeeding day saw him minister to the mirth of vice, and protract the revels of debauchery; and he returned to his closet with a heart wrung with keener anguish, and a mind more deeply depressed by a sense of its own humiliation.

After a fruitless struggle of some years with the strength of habit and of passion, he determined

Digitized by Google

upon the *publication* of his *Christian Hero*, under an idea that by turning the eyes of the world upon his principles and professions, a severe check would be given to his former propensities; and that his conduct must necessarily, if he would avoid the derision of the public, be accordant with the precepts he had taught. Accordingly he printed this treatise in 1701, and dedicated it to Lord Cutts, whose private secretary he was, and who had procured for him a company in Lord Lucas's regiment of Fusileers.

The result of the experiment was this: our author went on as he had done before, with the additional misery of perceiving that he had become an object of ridicule and raillery to his associates, and to the world at large. They, of course, compared him with the Hero whom he had so admirably delineated; and the contrast was so striking, that it could not fail, among the thoughtless and intemperate, to excite the sneer of malignant triumph, and the risibility of vacant mirth.

Were it not a common occurrence in life, it would be deemed altogether impossible, that the theory and practice of the same individual should be so completely opposed. No man knew better than Steele the value of religion and virtue, no man was better acquainted with the distinctions of right and wrong. From him the friendless and

Digitized by Google

the unfortunate were sure to receive the protection within his power; and where he could not alleviate, his sympathy was ever ready to share the afflictions of his brethren. His misfortune, the cause of all his errors, was, not to have clearly seen where his deficiencies lay; they were neither of the head nor of the heart, but merely of volition. Instead of writing a treatise to convince the understanding, which he wanted not, had he left the army and his seductive companions, he had immediately effected the cure he was in search of. The capability of doing this, however, at the period we are now recording, had been lost by neglect and want of habitual energy; he possessed the wish, but not the power of volition, to carry his purposes into execution.

I know no imbecility so truly to be commiserated as this. Steele, who felt, even with aggravation, all the bitterness of his folly, has in the Tatler, with an amiable candour, and with unsparing censure, drawn a perfect portrait of himself, though, as just observed, he ascribes his weakness to a wrong cause. It concludes in the following emphatic manner: "Thus, with all the good intentions in the world to amendment, this creature sins on against Heaven, himself, his friends, and his country, who all call for a better use of his talents. There is not a being under the sun

Digitized by Google

so miserable as this: he goes on in a pursuit he himself disapproves, and has no enjoyment but what is followed by remorse; no relief from remorse, but the repetition of his crime. It is possible I may talk of this person with too much indulgence; but I must repeat it, that I think this a character which is the most the object of pity of any in the world. The man in the pangs of the stone, gout, or any acute distemper, is not in so deplorable a condition, in the eye of right sense, as he that errs and repents, and repents and errs on. The fellow with broken limbs justly deserves your alms, for his impotent condition; but he that cannot use his own reason, is in a much worse state; for you see him in miserable circumstances, with his remedy at the same time in his own possession, if he would, or could use it." *

With such laudable severity did Steele pass sentence on his own conduct, and by so doing retrieved in a great measure the evils of his example; for these were confined to a narrow circle, while their reprobation circulated through the kingdom.

The same year which gave publicity to his *Christian Hero*, produced likewise his first suc-

* No. 27.

cessful Comedy. His motive for bringing it on the stage is somewhat curious; it was, he says, for the purpose of enlivening his character, and repelling the sarcasms of those who abused him for his declarations relative to religion. It is entitled *The Funeral, or Grief-à-la-mode*, and lashes with much wit and humour the extravagant professions of the Undertakers, and the chicanery and technical phraseology of the Lawyers. With regard to the undertakers, he observes in his Preface to the Play, "it is not in the power of any pen to paint them better than they do themselves; as for example, on a door I just now passed by, a great artist thus informs us of his cures upon the dead:

"W. W. known and approved for his art of embalming, having preserved the corpse of a gentlewoman sweet and entire thirteen years, without embowelling, and has reduced the bodies of several persons of quality to sweetness, in Flanders and Ireland, after nine months putrefaction in the ground, and they were known by their friends in England. No man performeth the like."

"He must," proceeds our author, "be strangely in love with this life, who is not touched with this kind invitation to be pickled; and the noble operator must be allowed a very useful person for bringing old friends together. Nor would it

Digitized by Google

be unworthy his labour to give us an account at large, of the *sweet* conversation that arose upon meeting such an *entire* friend as he mentions."

The variety of incident in this comedy, though defective in point of unity, rendered it a favourite when first brought forward, and it is even still occasionally acted. Had the Monarch then on the throne, and who had been much entertained by its representation, survived but a few years longer, the author had probably been indebted to this play for many essential benefits; as his name to be provided for, he has told us, was in the last table-book ever worn by the glorious and immortal King William.*

As the dramatic writings of Steele form a considerable feature in his literary character, I shall, for the sake of perspicuity and precision, notice them together, and without the interruption of intervening events.

His fertile genius soon completed another comic piece for the stage; and in 1703, the *Tender Husband, or the Accomplished Fools*, was presented to the public. In this play, the morality of which is pure, the humour genuine, and the delineation of character, both in outline and colouring, superior to the *Funeral*, he was assisted by

* Apology for himself and his writings, printed in 1715.

Digitized by Google

Addison, who likewise contributed the Prologue. It was not until after the death of his friend, that Steele acknowledged the assistance he had received; and he then did it in the following affectionate terms: "I remember," says he, "when I finished the *Tender Husband*, I told him (Addison) there was nothing I so ardently wished, as that we might sometime or other publish a work written by us both, which should bear the name of *The Monument*, in memory of our friendship. When the play above-mentioned was last acted, there were so many applauded strokes in it which I had from the same hand, that I thought very meanly of myself that I had never publickly acknowledged them."*

It is not possible in this place to resist the consolatory pleasure of dwelling for a few moments on the friendship which subsisted between these memorable men. Though of very different characters and tempers, one being calm and philosophic, the other irritable and impatient of control; one grave, the other gay and volatile to excess; yet did they both possess the same goodness of heart, an equal degree of active charity and compassion, and the same rectitude of principle and intention. Unfortunately for Steele, he

* Preface to the Drummer, second edition.

Digitized by Google

wanted the firm resolution and self-command which Addison had happily acquired, and he was likewise conscious of inferiority in intellectual ability; yet not the smallest atom of envy or of jealousy ever rankled in the bosom of this amiable man; on the contrary, he contemplated his friend with the most disinterested affection, and with a respect almost bordering upon adoration. In various parts of his writings, with a sincerity and frankness which excite alike the reader's pity and regard, he confesses his frailties, and contrasts himself with his more regular and accomplished companion. "We had never any difference," he observes, "but what arose from our different way of pursuing the same thing: the one, with patience, foresight, and temperate address, always waited and stemmed the torrent; while the other often plunged himself into it, and was as often taken out by the temper of him who stood weeping on the bank for his safety, whom he could not dissuade from leaping into it."*

His amor unus erat——
Fortunati ambo!——
Nulla dies unquam memori vos eximet ævo.

The justly merited attack of Collier on the immorality and profaneness of the stage, which

* Theatre No. 12.

Digitized by Google

was published in 1698, had already contributed toward purging the Theatre of many impurities; and Steele, whose pen was ever foremost in the cause of virtue and public decency, determined to write a comedy in strict conformity to the wishes of that author. The *Lying Lover*, written on this plan, was represented in 1704, but met with a reception very dissimilar to that which had been given to his former productions. It was condemned for being too serious and pathetic, and, in fact, partook much more of the tragic, than the comic muse. The exquisite distress in the meeting of a father and his only child in prison, after the commission of murder by the latter in a drunken quarrel, was certainly by no means calculated to produce the legitimate and expected effects of comedy. Several years after the condemnation of this piece, our poet, in making his defence before the House of Commons, on a false charge of sedition, and disaffection to the Church and State, appealed to this drama, as an instance of his sufferings in the support of morality. "I cannot tell, Sir," he exclaims, addressing the Speaker, "what they would have me to do, to prove myself a churchman; but I think I have appeared one even in so trifling a thing as a comedy. And considering me as a comic poet, I have been a martyr for

Digitized by Google

the church, for this play was damned for its piety." *

Our author experienced so much disappointment and disgust from what he deemed the unmerited fate of his *Lover*, that he ceased to write for the stage for the space of eighteen years; at the expiration of which period, however, he brought forward a comedy which has conferred a reputation upon him, in this department, durable as the language in which it is written. The *Conscious Lovers* was acted with singular but due success in the year 1722, and the profits arising from the theatre and the sale of the copy were very ample. To these the bounty of the King, to whom the play had been dedicated, proved a considerable addition; he presented the poet with a purse of five hundred pounds.

The tenderness and chaste morality which pervade this pleasing drama, founded, though with great improvement as to wit, incident, and humour, on the *Andria* of Terence, together with its beautiful and discriminative delineation of character, justly entitle it to a very high rank among the dramatic productions of our country.

The great, the appropriate praise of Steele, is, to have been the first who, after the licentious

* Vide Apology, page 259, et seq.

Digitized by Google

age of Charles the Second, endeavoured to introduce the Virtues on the stage. He clothed them with the brilliancy of genius; he placed them in situations the most interesting to the human heart; and he taught his audience not to laugh at, but to execrate vice, to despise the lewd fool and the witty rake, to applaud the efforts of the good, and to rejoice at the punishment of the wicked.

That, in an age so vitiated and debauched by preceding and contemporary dramatists, he should have been able to render modesty and morality fashionable on the stage, could only be the result of great talents. It was an Herculean task to turn the current of public opinion, and to convert what had been for years the uniform object of ridicule and vicious mirth, into a source of approbation, instruction, and delight. But Steele was well acquainted with the native feelings of the heart; he knew that though vice and folly may be drest in pleasing colours, and may for a time be rendered palatable, through the ill-directed influence of genius, yet that the hand of a master in the cause of insulted decency, is alone required utterly to efface the former impression; for to the honour of human nature it may be told, that where Virtue approaches with a smile, with Wit and Humour in her train,

Digitized by Google

Vice, however decorated, turns abashed, and sinks into the night from whence she sprang.

"There is no man," observes our author in the Spectator, when speaking of the licentiousness of the Theatre, "who loves his bottle or his mistress, in a manner so very abandoned, as not to be capable of relishing an agreeable character, that is no way a slave to either of those pursuits. A man that is temperate, generous, valiant, chaste, faithful, and honest, may, at the same time, have wit, humour, mirth, good breeding, and gallantry. While he exerts these latter qualities, twenty occasions might be invented to shew he is master of the other noble virtues. Such characters would smite and reprove the heart of a man of sense, when he is given up to his pleasures. He would see he has been mistaken all this while, and be convinced that a sound constitution and an innocent mind, are the true ingredients for becoming and enjoying life. All men of true taste would call a man of wit, who should turn his ambition this way, a friend and benefactor to his country; but I am at a loss what name they would give him who makes use of his capacity for contrary purposes." *

If Steele be compared with the contemporary writers of Comedy, he will be found in wit in-

* No. 51.

Digitized by Google

ferior to Congreve, perhaps in strong humour to Wycherly, but infinitely superior to both in morality, tenderness, and propriety of character. The wit of Congreve is bright and dazzling, but indiscriminate and fatiguing; it is allotted in equal portions, and in defiance both of nature and probability, to every personage in his pieces; the spectator is astonished, but not pleased; his heart is not touched; nor is his mirth, in general, excited. Of the drama of Wycherly, such is the extreme grossness, and such the bad tendency, that it is only with feelings of regret we make mention of his abilities, of humour so prostituted and wit so misapplied.

The unexpected failure of the *Lying Lovers* having determined Steele, for a time at least, to desert the stage, he projected the publication of a periodical paper; a medium through which, under an assumed name, he might convey the most useful instruction, and the most pleasing entertainment. The title of the paper, as the author has observed in his first number, was invented in honour of the fair sex, and the TATLER was therefore placed under their jurisdiction. The name of its conductor, a character happily imagined, and well supported, was taken from a previous publication of Swift. "A work of this nature," observes Steele, in his original dedication to the first volume of the Tatler, "requiring

Digitized by Google

time to grow into the notice of the world, it happened very luckily, that, a little before I had resolved upon this design, a gentleman had written predictions, and two or three other pieces, in my name, which had rendered it famous through all parts of Europe; and by an inimitable spirit and humour, raised it to as high a pitch of reputation, as it could possibly arrive at."

These predictions were written by Swift, for the year 1708, who wanting a ludicrous name to adorn them with, accidentally observed a sign over a Locksmith's house with the name of *Bickerstaff* underneath it. This struck him as adapted to his purpose, and adding the no very common christian name of *Isaac*, he imagined he had formed an unprecedented conjunction; in this, however, he was mistaken, for sometime afterwards a man was found in London who owned both names.

Under the character of an adept in Astrology, the Bickerstaff of Swift satirizes, with infinite humour, the common credulity of his times; and is particularly severe upon John Partridge, the most celebrated almanack maker of the day, who pretended to predict the events of each ensuing year. As the astrological reputation of Bickerstaff is supported with much pleasantry by Steele, in his Tatler, and as he has frequently

Digitized by Google

introduced Partridge and his supposed death, in conformity to the ludicrous account of the Dean, especially in Nos. 7, 11, 35, 44, 56, 59, 96, 99, and 118, &c. it will probably not be deemed irrelevant to our subject, should we dwell a little longer upon this famous prediction, and its laughable consequences.

The title of the pamphlet, which obtained so much celebrity as to be burnt by the Inquisition in Portugal, who condemned its author and its readers, runs thus: "Predictions for the year 1708: Wherein the month, and the day of the month, are set down, the persons named, and the great actions and events of next year particularly related, as they will come to pass. Written to prevent the people of England from being further imposed on by vulgar almanack makers. By Isaac Bickerstaff, Esq."

The prediction relative to the great philomath, and which takes precedence of a very long list, is written in the following terms.

"My first prediction is but a trifle, yet I will mention it, to shew how ignorant these sottish pretenders to astrology are in their own concerns: it relates to Partridge the almanack maker; I have consulted the star of his nativity by my own rules, and find he will infallibly die upon the 29th of March next, about eleven at

Digitized by Google

night, of a raging fever; therefore I advise him to consider of it, and settle his affairs in time."*

This was followed up by "An Answer to Bickerstaff," and another pamphlet called "The Accomplishment of the first of Mr. Bickerstaff's predictions, being an account of the death of Mr. Partridge, the almanack maker, upon the 29th instant," both written by Swift, with his usual exquisite humour.

It is astonishing what a number of persons built their faith on the prediction, and actually believed the accomplishment had taken place in all respects according to the relation. The wits of the time too, among whom were Steele and Addison, supported Swift, and uniformly affirmed that Partridge had died on the day and hour predicted.

The distress and vexation of Partridge himself upon this occasion were beyond measure ridiculous; and he absolutely had the folly to insert the following advertisement, which is copied in the Tatler, at the close of his next year's almanack.

"Whereas it has been industriously given out by Isaac Bickerstaff, Esq. and others, to prevent the sale of this year's almanack, that John Partridge

* Swift's Works, Vol. x. p. 16. 8vo. edition in 19 vols. by Nichols.

Digitized by Google

is dead: this may inform all his loving countrymen, that he is still living, in health, and they are knaves that reported it otherwise."*

Steele, who was fond of the subject, both as it afforded much scope for ingenious raillery, and was intimately connected with the fictitious character he had adopted, has, in a succeeding paper, again introduced poor Partridge and his pretended decease.

"Whereas a commission of interment has been awarded against Doctor John Partridge, philomath, professor of physic and astrology; and whereas the said Partridge hath not surrendered himself, nor shewn cause to the contrary; these are to certify, that the company of upholders will proceed to bury him from Cordwainer's-hall, on Tuesday the twenty-ninth instant, where any six of his surviving friends, who still believe him to be alive, are desired to come prepared to hold up the pall.

"Note; we shall light away at six in the evening, there being to be a sermon."†

The most entertaining account, however, of the singularly comic consequences of this prediction, was drawn up by the Rev. Dr. Yalden, preacher of Bridewell, Mr. Partridge's near

* No 96. † No. 99.

Digitized by Google

neighbour. It is entitled, "Squire Bickerstaff detected; or, the astrological impostor convicted: by John Partridge, student in physic, and astrology." As it contributed, perhaps, more than any other production on the subject, to circulate the fame of Bickerstaff, and consequently to render the assumption of his name by Steele more popular and successful, and as it is written with genuine wit, and now only to be found in the voluminous edition of Swift by Nichols, I shall transcribe it for the reader's amusement.

"It is hard, my dear countrymen of these united nations, it is very hard, that a Briton born, a protestant astrologer, a man of revolution principles, an assertor of the liberty and property of the people, should cry out in vain for justice against a Frenchman, a papist, and an illiterate pretender to science, that would blast my reputation, most inhumanly bury me alive, and defraud my native country of those services which, in my double capacity, I daily offer the public.

"What great provocations I have received, let the impartial reader judge, and how unwillingly, even in my own defence, I now enter the lists against falsehood, ignorance, and envy: but I am exasperated, at length, to drag out this Cacus from the den of obscurity where he lurks, detect him by the light of those stars he has so

impudently traduced, and show there is not a monster in the skies so pernicious and malevolent to mankind, as an ignorant pretender to physic and astrology. I shall not directly fall on the many gross errors, nor expose the notorious absurdities of this prostitute libeller, till I have let the learned world fairly into the controversy depending, and then leave the unprejudiced to judge of the merits and justice of my cause.

"It was toward the conclusion of the year 1707, when an impudent pamphlet crept into the world, entitled, *Predictions, &c. by Isaac Bickerstaff, Esq.* Among the many arrogant assertions laid down by that lying spirit of divination, he was pleased to pitch on the Cardinal de Noailles and myself, among many other eminent and illustrious persons, that were to die within the compass of the ensuing year; and peremptorily fixes the month, day, and hour of our deaths: this, I think, is sporting with great men, and public spirits, to the scandal of religion, and reproach of power; and if sovereign princes and astrologers must make diversion for the vulgar—why then farewell, say I, to all governments, ecclesiastical and civil. But, I thank my better stars, I am alive to confront this false and audacious predictor, and to make him rue the hour he ever affronted a man of science and resent-

Digitized by Google

ment. The cardinal may take what measures he pleases with him; as his excellency is a foreigner, and a papist, he has no reason to rely on me for his justification; I shall only assure the world he is alive:——but as he was bred to letters, and is master of a pen, let him use it in his own defence. In the mean time, I shall present the public with a faithful narrative of the ungenerous treatment and hard usage I have received, from the virulent papers, and malicious practices, of this pretended astrologer.

"A true and impartial account of the proceedings of Isaac Bickerstaff, Esq. against me.

"The 28th of March, *anno dom.* 1708, being the night this sham prophet had so impudently fixed for my last, which made little impression on myself; but I cannot answer for my whole family; for my wife with concern more than usual, prevailed on me to take somewhat to sweat for a cold; and, between the hours of eight and nine, to go to bed; the maid, as she was warming my bed, with a curiosity natural to young wenches, runs to the window, and asks of one passing the street, who the bell tolled for? Dr. Partridge, says he, the famous almanack-maker, who died suddenly this evening: the poor girl provoked

Digitized by Google

told him, he lied like a rascal; the other very sedately replied, the sexton had so informed him; and if false, he was to blame for imposing upon a stranger. She asked a second, and a third, as they passed, and every one was in the same tone. Now, I do not say these are accomplices to a certain astrological squire, and that one Bickerstaff might be sauntering thereabout, because I will assert nothing here, but what I dare attest for plain matter of fact. My wife at this fell into a violent disorder; and I must own I was a little discomposed at the oddness of the accident. In the mean time one knocks at my door; Betty runs down, and opening, finds a sober, grave person, who modestly inquires if this was Dr. Partridge's? she, taking him for some cautious city patient, that came at that time for privacy, shows him into the dining room. As soon as I could compose myself, I went to him, and was surprised to find my gentleman mounted on a table, with a two foot rule in his hand, measuring my walls, and taking the dimensions of the room. Pray, sir, says I, not to interrupt you, have you any business with me? only, sir, replies he, order the girl to bring me a better light, for this is but a very dim one. Sir, says I, my name is Partridge: O! the doctor's brother, belike, cries he; the stair-case, I believe, and these

Digitized by Google

two apartments, hung in close mourning, will be sufficient, and only a strip of bays round the other rooms. The doctor must needs die rich, he had great dealings in his way for many years; if he had no family coat, you had as good use the escutcheons of the company, they are as showish, and will look as magnificent, as if he was descended from the blood royal. With that I assumed a greater air of authority, and demanded who employed him, or how he came there? Why, I was sent, sir, by the company of Undertakers, says he, and they were employed by the honest gentleman who is executor to the good doctor departed; and our rascally porter, I believe, is fallen fast asleep with the black cloth and sconces, or he had been here, and we might have been tacking up by this time. Sir, says I, pray be advised by a friend, and make the best of your speed out of my doors, for I hear my wife's voice, (which, by the by, is pretty distinguishable,) and in that corner of the room stands a good cudgel, which somebody has felt before now; if that light in her hands, and she know the business you come about, without consulting the stars, I can assure you it will be employed very much to the detriment of your person. Sir, cries he, bowing with great civility, I perceive extreme grief for the loss of the doctor

Digitized by Google

disorders you a little at present, but early in the morning I will wait on you with all the necessary materials. Now I mention no Mr. Bickerstaff; nor do I say, that a certain star-gazing squire has been playing my executor before his time; but I leave the world to judge, and he that puts things and things fairly together will not be much wide of the mark.

"Well, once more I got my doors closed, and prepared for bed, in hopes of a little repose, after so many ruffling adventures; just as I was putting out my light in order to it, another bounces as hard as he can knock; I open the window, and ask who is there, and what he wants? I am Ned the sexton, replies he, and come to know whether the doctor left any orders for a funeral sermon, and where he is to be laid, and whether his grave is to be plain or bricked? Why, sirrah, says I, you know me well enough; you know I am not dead, and how dare you affront me after this manner? Alackaday, sir, replies the fellow, why it is in print, and the whole town knows you are dead; why, there is Mr. White, the joiner, is but fitting screws to your coffin, he will be here with it in an instant: he was afraid you would have wanted it before this time. Sirrah, sirrah, says I, you shall know to-morrow to your cost, that I am alive, and alive like to be. Why, it is strange,

Digitized by Google

sir, says he, you should make such a secret of your death to us that are your neighbours; it looks as if you had a design to defraud the church of its dues; and let me tell you, for one that has lived so long by the heavens, that is unhandsomely done. Hist, hist, says another rogue, that stood by him; away, doctor, into your flannel gear as fast as you can, for here is a whole pack of dismals coming to you, with their black equipage, and how indecent will it look for you to stand frighting folks at your window, when you should have been in your coffin this three hours? In short, what with undertakers, embalmers, joiners, sextons, and your damned elegy hawkers upon a late practitioner in physic and astrology, I got not one wink of sleep that night, nor scarce a moment's rest ever since. Now I doubt not but this villanous squire has the impudence to assert that these are entirely strangers to him: he, good man, knows nothing of the matter, and honest Isaac Bickerstaff, I warrant you, is more a man of honour than to be an accomplice with a pack of rascals, that walk the streets on nights, and disturb good people in their beds; but he is out if he thinks the whole world is blind; for there is one John Partridge can smell a knave as far as Grub-street,——although he lies in the most exalted garret, and writes himself squire:—but I

will keep my temper, and proceed in the narration.

"I could not stir out of doors for the space of three months after this, but presently one comes up to me in the street; Mr. Partridge, that coffin you was last buried in, I have not been yet paid for: doctor, cries another dog, how do you think people can live by making of graves for nothing? next time you die, you may even toll out the bell yourself for Ned. A third rogue tips me by the elbow, and wonders how I have the conscience to sneak abroad without paying my funeral expences. Lord, says one, I durst have swore that was honest Dr. Partridge, my old friend; but, poor man, he is gone. I beg your pardon, says another, you look so like my old acquaintance, that I used to consult on some private occasions: but, alack, he is gone the way of all flesh——Look, look, look, cries a third, after a competent space of staring at me, would not one think our neighbour the almanack maker was crept out of his grave, to take the other peep at the stars in this world, and show how much he is improved in fortune-telling by having taken a journey to the other.

"Nay, the very reader of our parish, a good, sober, discreet person, has sent two or three times for me to come and be buried decently, or

Digitized by Google

send him sufficient reasons to the contrary; or, if I have been interred in any other parish, to produce my certificate, as the act requires. My poor wife is run almost distracted with being called widow Partridge, when she knows it is false; and once a term she is cited into the court to take out letters of administration. But the greatest grievance is, a paltry quack, that takes up my calling just under my nose, and in his printed directions, with N. B. says, he lives in the house of the late ingenious Mr. John Partrige, an eminent practitioner in leather, physic, and astrology.

"But to shew how far the wicked spirit of envy, malice, and resentment, can hurry some men, my nameless old persecutor had provided me a monument at the stonecutter's, and would have erected it in the parish church; and this piece of notorious and expensive villany had actually succeeded, if I had not used my utmost interest with the vestry, where it was carried at last but by two voices, that I am alive. That stratagem failing, out comes a long sable elegy, bedecked with hour glasses, mattocks, sculls, spades, and skeletons, with an epitaph, as confidently written to abuse me and my profession as if I had been under ground these twenty years.

Digitized by Google

"And after such barbarous treatment as this, can the world blame me, when I ask, what is become of the freedom of an Englishman? And where is the liberty and property that my old glorious friend came over to assert? We have drove popery out of the nation, and sent slavery to foreign climes. The arts only remain in bondage, when a man of science and character shall be openly insulted, in the midst of the many useful services he is daily paying the public. Was it ever heard, even in Turkey or Algiers, that a state astrologer was bantered out of his life by an ignorant impostor, or bawled out of the world by a pack of villanous, deep-mouthed hawkers? Though I print almanacks, and publish advertisements; though I produce certificates under the minister's and churchwarden's hands I am alive, and attest the same on oath at the quarter sessions, out comes a full and true relation of the death and interment of John Partrige; truth is bore down, attestations neglected, the testimony of sober persons despised, and a man is looked upon by his neighbours as if he had been seven years dead, and is buried alive in the midst of his friends and acquaintance.

"Now can any man of common sense think it consistent with the honour of my profession, and not much beneath the dignity of a philoso-

Digitized by Google

pher, to stand bawling before his own door?—alive! alive! ho! the famous Dr. Partridge! no counterfeit, but all alive!——as if I had the twelve celestial monsters of the zodiac to show within, or was forced for a livelihood to turn retailer to May and Bartholomew fairs. Therefore, if her majesty would but graciously be pleased to think a hardship of this nature worthy her royal consideration, and the next parliament, in their great wisdom, cast but an eye toward the deplorable case of their old philomath, that annually bestows his good wishes on them, I am sure there is one Isaac Bickerstaff, Esq. would soon be trussed up for his bloody predictions, and putting good subjects in terror of their lives: and that henceforward to murder a man by way of prophecy, and bury him in a printed letter either to a lord or commoner, shall as legally entitle him to the present possession of Tyburn, as if he robbed on the highway, or cut your throat in bed.

"I shall demonstrate to the judicious that France and Rome are at the bottom of this horrid conspiracy against me; and that the culprit aforesaid is a popish emissary, has paid his visits to St. Germain's, and is now in the measures of Lewis 14th. That, in attempting my

Digitized by Google

reputation, there is a general massacre of learning designed in these realms; and through my sides there is a wound given to all the protestant almanack makers in the universe." *

Having with singular felicity chosen a name and character, Steele had next to determine upon the plan he should pursue in the prosecution of his work. Conscious that variety was necessary to attract attention, that miscellaneous information would be most welcome to the idle and the busy, and that the love for political news was, unfortunately, the prevailing fascination of the day, he divided his papers into different heads, and dated these from different parts of the town. This arrangement included, 1. Gallantry, pleasure, and entertainment. 2. Poetry. 3. Learning. 4. Foreign and domestic news, and 5. Miscellaneous subjects. The places chosen for the discussion of these topics were, as respectively adapted to the above enumeration, White's Chocolate-house. Will's Coffee-house. The Grecian Coffee-house. St. James's Coffee-house, and Bickerstaff's own Apartment.

Each paper contained three or four, and sometimes the whole of these branches. By this mean,

* Swift's Works by Nichols, Vol. 5. p. 31. et seq.

Digitized by Google

variety was indeed obtained; but unity, simplicity, and the necessary room for due discussion on important subjects, were lost. This motley and familiar manner was, however, not ill-adapted to the general purpose of the paper, as originally laid down by Steele, which was merely to expose the false arts of life; to pull off the disguises of cunning, vanity, and affectation; and to recommend a general simplicity in our dress, our discourse, and our behaviour.* But as this intention was soon broken in upon, and subjects of a more weighty and serious nature intermingled, more especially after the junction of Addison, it became necessary to deviate from the first design, and to restrict each paper to fewer topics, until at length, especially in the third and fourth volumes, the numbers usually assumed an uniform garb.

The Tatler was commenced, unknown to Addison, on April 12, 1709, and was published thrice a week, on Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday. It had proceeded, however, no farther than the sixth number, when the author unveiled himself to Addison, by inserting a criticism on a passage in Virgil, which that elegant scholar had formerly communicated to him. In consequence

* Vide Dedication to the first volume of the Tatler.

Digitized by Google

of this discovery, the assistance of Addison was requested, and his first communication is in N° 18, dated May the twenty-first.*

That Addison proved a most important auxiliary, and contributed in a very essential manner toward the popularity and utility of the work, is confessed by Steele in terms which do him the highest honour, and evince a heart free from the degrading passions of jealousy and envy. "I have only one gentleman," he observes in his Preface, "who will be nameless, to thank for any frequent assistance to me, which indeed it would have been barbarous in him to have denied to one with whom he has lived in an intimacy from childhood, considering the great ease with which he is able to dispatch the most entertaining pieces of this nature. This good office he performed with such force of genius, humour, wit and learning, that I fared like a distressed prince, who calls in a powerful neighbour to his aid; I was undone by my auxiliary; when I had once called him in, I could not subsist without dependance on him."

It should not be forgotten, however, that it is to

* Dr. Johnson has dated the first communication of Addison, May 26, 1709, being No. 20; but Steele, in his Preface, has declared that the description of the distress of the News-writers, in No. 18, May 21, was the production of his friend.

Digitized by Google

Steele alone we are indebted for Addison, and the various other writers in the Tatler, Spectator, and Guardian, He it was who formed them into a society, who, at his own expense and risque, brought forward their productions, and with indefatigable patience and perseverance, and in opposition to calumny and reproach, carried on to ultimate success one of the most important series of papers ever offered to the public, and which forms an era in our national literature. It may be said, therefore, with truth, that had not Steele projected the plan, and supported it with so much zeal and address, the exquisite essays of Addison had never been written; and that, consequently, the benefits resulting from these compositions, and those of his other coadjutors, may primarily be referred to his happy genius and ever active philanthropy.

If we consider the invention of Steele, as discoverable in the scheme and conduct of the Tatler; if we reflect upon the finely drawn and highly finished character of Bickerstaff, in his varied offices of philosopher, humourist, astrologer, and censor, the vast number of his own elegant and useful papers, and the beauty and value of those which, through his means, saw the light, we cannot hesitate in honouring him with the appellation of THE FATHER OF PERIODICAL WRITING.

Digitized by Google

The Tatler was regularly continued until January 2, 1710-11, Addison affording his assistance to December 23; when it was dropped, without the concurrence of the latter, and because, as Steele says, the purpose of it was wholly lost by his being so long understood as the author and conductor. It had nevertheless been very popular, and had obtained a rapid sale; and though the expense of carrying it on must have been considerable, the profits accruing to Steele could not be small. For, independent of what was produced by its sale in separate numbers, when these were collected into volumes they sold, printed on fine paper in octavo, at the very extraordinary price, considering the value of money at that time, of a guinea per volume in boards. The first volume made its appearance, July 10, 1713, the second on the first of September following, and the third and fourth the succeeding year.

Two months after the discontinuance of the Tatler, the world was agreeably surprized by the publication of a new periodical paper, under the title of the SPECTATOR, the first number of which appeared on March the first, 1711.

The plan of this paper, which is, without question, the best model for a periodical work yet offered to the public, was arranged, in the interim abovementioned, between Steele and Addison.

Digitized by Google

From a confidence in the copiousness of their materials it was published daily; nor had the world reason to complain that they had overrated their abilities, or estimated their resources beyond what they could command.

The second number, written by Steele, introduces that association of characters, which has rendered this production so singularly interesting and dramatic. As the editor and conductor of the the work, this first description of the club comes with propriety from our author; but the principal features in the character of the Spectator, the history of whose mind and feelings pervades the greater part of the design, and gives it an unity, an individuality and organization, which no mere series of essays can pretend to, together with the inimitable portraits of Sir Roger de Coverly and Will Honeycomb, seem to have been more peculiarly the charge of Addison; whilst the residue of the club, the pictures of the Templar, Captain Sentry, Sir Andrew Freeport, and the Clergyman, was in a great measure allotted to Steele.

As the consideration of merit, however, in the delineation of character, with respect both to Addison and Steele, will, in a future division of our volume, be dwelt upon at some length, we shall decline any remarks upon it in this place.

Though the essays of Steele have been in gene-

Digitized by Google

ral esteemed inferior, and perhaps not unjustly so, to the admirable compositions of his friend and associate, they will be found, if read attentively, and the comparison be withdrawn, to possess much positive and sterling merit. From a predilection for the style and manner of Addison, they have been greatly and undeservedly neglected; whereas, had they been published separately, their beauties, which are now somewhat eclipsed by the neighbourhood of superior charms, would have been immediately discerned, and the admiration which they should excite without out hesitation bestowed. They display a minute knowledge of mankind, are written with great spirit and vivacity, and breathe the purest morality, and the most engaging benevolence and candour.

In an age when, compared with the present, reading and literature were little resorted to either for utility or amusement, the Spectator, by touching with delicate satire and insinuating elegance every fashionable topic of the day, obtained a circulation unprecedented at that time, and, I believe, not paralleled since. Dr. Fleetwood, in a letter to the bishop of Salisbury, dated June the 17th, 1712, estimates the daily sale of the Spectator at 14,000.* Of this calculation, which far ex-

* Pope's Literary Correspondence, vol. iv. p. 147. 8vo. 1736, printed for E. Curll.

Digitized by Google

ceeds the amount mentioned by Dr. Johnson,* there is no reason I apprehend, to doubt the accuracy; and it affords a pleasing and decisive testimony of the high esteem in which the authors were held, and of the avidity with which their precepts of taste and elegance, of wisdom and virtue, were purchased and disseminated.

The Spectator was continued daily, without interruption, until December the 6th, 1712, when the seventh volume was completed. It was resumed on June the 18th, 1714, and was published thrice a week, to December the 20th, of the same year; at which period another volume being formed, it was finally closed.

During part of the year 1712, it appears from our author's correspondence, that either from necessity or choice, either with the view of escaping the importunity of his creditors, or for the mere purposes of privacy and seclusion, he removed, for a short period, to a house situated between Hampstead and London. It is from the following passage in a letter to Mr. Pope, dated June 1st, 1712, that we learn this incident in his eventful life.

"I am at a solitude,"† he writes, "an house

* Johnson's Lives of the Poets, vol. ii. p. 89, ed. 1801.

† It is to be feared, says Mr. Nichols, there were too many pecuniary reasons for this temporary solitude.

Digitized by Google

between Hampstead and London, wherein *Sir Charles Sedley died.** This circumstance set me a thinking and ruminating upon the employments in which men of wit exercise themselves. It was said of Sir Charles, *who breathed his last in this room*,

> Sedley has that prevailing gentle art,
> Which can with a resistless charm impart
> The loosest wishes to the chastest heart;
> Raise such a conflict, kindle such a fire
> Between declining virtue and desire,
> Till the poor vanquish'd maid dissolves away
> In dreams all night, in sighs and tears all day.

"This was an happy talent to a man of the town; but, I dare say, without presuming to make uncharitable conjectures on the author's present condition, he would rather have had it said of him that he prayed,

> ——Oh thou my voice inspire,
> Who touch'd Isaiah's hallow'd lips with fire."†

This temporary retirement of Steele has been recorded by the editor of the *Biographia Dramatica*.‡

* About eight or nine years before the date of this letter.

† Vide Steele's Letters to his Friends, vol. ii. p. 329.

‡ Edition of 1782. Life of Sir Richard Steele.

Digitized by Google

"Sir Richard," he observes, "retired to a small house on Haverstock Hill, in the road to Hampstead; *part of this building remains, and is now a cottage.* Here Mr. Pope, and other members of the Kit-cat Club, (which, during summer, was held at the Upper Flask, on Hampstead Heath,) used to call on him, and take him in their carriages to the place of rendezvous."

Of this cottage, memorable as the retreat of Steele, and remarkable for the death of the accomplished, but dissipated, Sedley, an elegant and correct drawing has been taken by Mr. Freebairn, and engraven for this work. Here Steele spent the summer days of 1712 in the composition of many of his Spectators, returning generally to town at night, and to the society of his wife, who, at this time, had lodgings in Berry-street.*

In the interval, between the completion of the seventh and the commencement of the eighth volume of the Spectator, animated by the extraordinary success of that work, Steele resolved

* That our author left his cottage in the autumn, is probable from the circumstance of his taking a house for Mrs. Steele, at the close of this summer, in Bloomsbury Square; and from his correspondence we learn that she was actually in the house on the 2d of September, 1712. Vide Steele's Letters, vol. i. p. 92.

Digitized by Google

upon the assumption of a similar design, though under a different name and character. Accordingly on Thursday, March the 12th, 1713, came out the first number of the GUARDIAN, which was continued daily for several months, the last paper being dated October the 1st of that year.

Though *Mr. Ironside* as Guardian to the Lizard family, held an office more contracted in its sphere than that which his immediate predecessor enjoyed, the same variety of subject, fertility of invention, and comic powers, which so strongly captivated the readers of the Spectator, were *equally* discoverable in the lucubrations of the venerable *Nestor*. Morality, piety, and monitory lessons of prudence and experience, the necessary attendants on his age and situation, occupy, as might be expected, no small portion of the Guardian's attention. "My design," says he, "upon the whole, is no less than to make the pulpit, the bar, and the stage, all act in concert in the care of piety, justice, and virtue; for I am past all the regards of this life, and have nothing to manage with *any person or party*, but to deliver myself, as becomes an old man with one foot in the grave, and one who thinks he is passing to eternity." *

Had Steele rigorously adhered to the resolu-

* Vol. 1, No. 1.

Digitized by Google

tion distinguished by Italics, it had been fortunate for himself, and for the republic of letters; but the ardour of his politics was too powerful for his philosophy, and he had completed but forty numbers when he violated his plan of neutrality, and entered into all the turbulence of contending parties. Independent of this blemish, for such it assuredly is in a work devoted to literature and ethics, the design is supported with consistency and spirit; and the various characters of the Lizard family, their cares, passions, interests, and diversions, afford scope for much raillery, instruction, and entertainment.

The assistance which our author had so amply received during the publication of his former papers, was with little diminution continued in the present. The first volume contains many capital essays by Berkeley, Pope, and Tickell, and the second is greatly indebted to Addison.

After reaching one hundred and seventy-five numbers, Steele, who had by this time completely involved himself in the blaze of politics, abruptly dropped the Guardian,* to attack the tory prin-

* The true reason, observes Pope, that Steele laid down this paper, was a quarrel between him and J. Tonson. He stood engaged to his bookseller in articles of penalty for all the Guardians; and by desisting two days, and altering the title of the paper to that of the Englishman, was quit of the obligation, these papers being printed for Buckley.

Digitized by Google

ciples of the *Examiner*, and to push his career of politics in the pages of the ENGLISHMAN, a paper which he commenced on October the 6th, 1713, only a few days after the decease of his former work, and the close of which subjected him to a prosecution from the House of Commons.

Here then, relinquishing for the present any further consideration of the mere literary occupations of Steele, we turn with reluctance to record the political warfare in which he was for several years engaged. This, as operating materially upon his character and situation in life, demands the notice of his biographer.

In no period of our annals did the spirit of party ever prove more violent than during the reign of Queen Anne. That amiable Princess wanted the firmness and decision which could alone enable her to act for herself in the choice of her ministers. Though inclined to tory principles both in church and state, she saw herself in an early period of her reign, through the influence of the Duchess of Marlborough, completely in the power of the Whigs; and it was only toward the close of her life, from an ardent wish of securing the succession to the exiled members of her family, that she broke through her natural love of indolence and ease, and, by

Digitized by Google

exerting himself strongly in favour of the tory party, occasioned such an ebullition as nearly endangered the nation by its uncontrollable violence and heat.

Steele who had studied with much accuracy the laws and consitution of his country, had acquired, under the reign of William, a decided predilection for those principles which, in our mixed form of government, so admirably protect the liberties of the people, and prove a check so effectual to an ambitious extension of the prerogatives of the crown. Faithful through life to the cause he had espoused. and bold in the exhibition of his patriotism, no considerations of interest or safety, no opposition, however powerful or able, deterred him from prosecuting what he deemed, after mature reflection, essential to the welfare of his country.

The death of King William, who, it is well known, meditated the promotion of our author, had thrown a heavy gloom upon his prospects. This was, however, in a short time, dispersed through the friendly interference of Addison, who entertaining, though with less apparent zeal, the same political tenets, recommended him, soon after the accession of the Queen, to the patronage of Lords Halifax and Sunderland. By these noblemen, leaders of the whig interest, he was appointed

Digitized by Google

to the post of gazetteer, an office the duties of which he faithfully and accurately discharged.*

For his next promotion he was indebted to the Tatler. This paper, which, in its commencement, mingled politics and news with other topics, rapidly extended his reputation, and gave him considerable rank, both in the literary and political world. He had seized every opportunity, during his periodical labours, of expressing his approbation of the whig ministry, who esteemed his declarations in their favour of so much value, that, in 1710, they made him a *Commissioner of the Stamp-office.*

Steele entered on his new employment at a period when the whig ministry, through its own indiscreet violence, was tottering to its foundation. The Lord Treasurer Godolphin had, by an injudicious prosecution, elevated an insignificant bigot to the honours and triumph of a martyr, and precipitated his own downfal. On November the 6th, 1709, Dr. Henry Sacheverell preached a

* Steele calls the gazetteer the lowest minister of state, and says in his Apology, that he never erred against the rules observed by all ministries, to keep the Gazette very innocent and very insipid. "It is believed," continues he, "that it was to the reproaches he heard every gazette day against the writer of it, that the defendant owes the fortitude of being remarkably negligent of what people say, which he does not deserve."

Digitized by Google

sermon at St. Paul's against popular resistance to regal authority, and was supposed to have alluded to the Earl, under the fictitious name of Volpone. Piqued at this allusion, the treasurer very imprudently resolved upon his impeachment, and, in March, 1710, the House of Commons voted this sermon a libel on her majesty and her government, the revolution, the protestant succession, and the parliament. His sentence was, a suspension from preaching for three years, and the sermon was condemned to be burnt by the hangman.*

Had the Earl reflected upon the conduct of King William on a similar occasion, and copied the example, he had probably maintained his post, and escaped the universal reproach and obloquy which immediately followed the prosecution. "A certain great person," relates Swift, "who very much distinguished himself by his zeal in forwarding this impeachment, had, several years ago, en-

* Dr. Sacheverell, during his suspension, made a kind of triumphal progress through divers parts of the kingdom, during which period he was collated to a living near Shrewsbury; and, in the same month that his suspension ended, had the valuable rectory of St. Andrews, Holborn, given him by the Queen, April 13th, 1713. At that time his reputation was so high, that he was enabled to sell the first sermon preached after his sentence expired, (on Palm Sunday,) for the sum of 100*l*; and upwards of 40,000 copies, it is said, were soon sold.

General Biographical Dictionary, Vol. ii. p. 182. *ed.* 1784.

Digitized by Google

deavoured to persuade the late king to give way to just such another attempt. He told his majesty, there was a certain clergyman, who preached very dangerous sermons, and that the only way to put a stop to such insolence was, to impeach him in parliament. The King enquired the character of the man: 'O sir,' said my Lord, 'the most violent, hot, positive fellow in England; so extremely wilful, that I believe he would be heartily glad to be a martyr.' The King answered, 'Is it so? then I am resolved to disappoint him;' and would never hear more of the matter; by which that hopeful project unhappily miscarried." *

From motives of gratitude, and with the view of defending his falling patron, now menaced with speedy destruction from the triumph of the tory faction in the person of Sacheverell, whose prosecution had rendered him almost an object of adoration through the kingdom, Steele published several pamphlets, under the title of PASQUIN, in vindication of the measures of Godolphin. The effort was, however, fruitless; for on August the 10th, 1710, the whigs were dismissed, and Robert Harley, afterwards Earl of Oxford, was created treasurer and chancellor of the exchequer.

The abilities which Steele had displayed in sup-

* Swift's Works, vol. iii. p. 82. Nichols's ed. 1801.

Digitized by Google

port of the late ministry, induced Mr. Harley to consider his exertions of considerable consequence; and, concluding that he might be won over by the powerful and customary temptations of interest and flattery, he continued him in his offices, declaring at the same time his high estimation of his character, and promising to seize an early opportunity of evincing his inclination to serve him.

These professions had, however, no influence over the steady patriotism of our author; yet as he held places under the present government, he justly thought it incumbent upon him to be silent with regard to political affairs; a resolution, to which, with few and trifling exceptions, he prudently adhered for a length of time. One of these is a letter to the Duke of Marlborough, on his Grace's dismission from his employments in December 1711, and entitled, *An Englishman's Thanks to the Duke of Marlborough.* His Grace had a very sincere esteem for Steele, and the epistle in question is written in affectionate terms, and in a style of warm encomium.

It was not until April, 1713, that Steele openly violated his antipolitical vow. On the twenty-eighth of that month, and in the forty-first number of the Guardian, he entered into a controversy with the tory paper called *The Examiner*, which

Digitized by Google

was conducted with considerable ability, but extreme virulence, by the celebrated Dr. Swift, who had in vain endeavoured to bring Steele into the measures of administration.

The alarm indeed among the Whigs, concerning the intentions of the ministry, was at this conjuncture very great. They conceived, and probably not without some foundation, that the peace, which was now rapidly negociating, and which was proclaimed on May the 5th, 1713, included secret articles injurious to the laws, the liberty, and the religion of the country: in fact, that it had been determined on by France and the tory ministers, that on the death of the Queen the act of settlement should be rendered void, and the pretender established on the throne of his ancestors.

To counteract a project so truly formidable, so destructive of the happiness and prosperity of the kingdom, was, in the opinion of Steele, the duty of every patriot, and ought to be superior to every personal consideration. He therefore immediately threw off all reserve, and took a decided part, in opposition to those who, he had but too much reason to suppose, were tampering with the liberties of their country. Having formed this resolution, he very justly thought it necessary, as a proof of the rectitude and disinterested nature of his motives, to relinquish whatever emolument

Digitized by Google

he derived from the crown and its ministers. He instantly resigned, therefore, the pension which, as one of the household of the late Prince George of Denmark, he had hitherto received from the Queen; and the following letter to Lord Oxford, which merits transcription, both for its matter and manner, contains the voluntary resignation of his place in the Stamp-office.

"To the Right Honourable the Lord High Treasurer of Great Britain.

Bloomsbury-square, June 4th, 1713.

"MY LORD,

"I PRESUME to give your lordship this trouble, to acquaint you, that having an ambition to serve in the ensuing parliament, I humbly desire your lordship will be pleased to accept of my resignation of my office, as commissioner of the Stamp Revenues.

"I should have done this sooner, but I heard the commission was passing without my name in it. I would not be guilty of the arrogance of resigning that which I could not hold. But having since heard this contradicted, I am obliged to give it up, as, with great humility, I do by this present writing.

"Give me leave, on this occasion, to say something in relation to the late men in power; and to

Digitized by Google

assure you that, whatever I have done, or said, or written, has proceeded from no other motive, than the love of that which I think truth. For merely as to my own affairs, I could not wish any man in authority, in preference to your lordship, who favour those who become your dependants with a greater liberality of heart than any man whom I have before observed. When I had the honour of a short conversation with your lordship, you were pleased not only to signify to me, that I should remain in this office, but also to add, that if I would name to you any one of more value, that would be more commodious to me, you would favour me in it. I am now, my lord, going out of any particular dependance on your lordship, and shall tell you, with the freedom of an indifferent man, that it is impossible for any man, who thinks, and has public spirit, not to tremble at seeing his country, in its present circumstances, in the hands of so daring a genius. If incidents should arise, that should place your safety, and what ambitious men call greatness, in a balance against the public good, our all depends on your choice, under such a temptation. You have my hearty prayers to heaven, to avert all such dangers from you. I thank your lordship for the regard and distinction which you have at sundry times shewn me, and wish you, with your coun-

Digitized by Google

try's good, all happiness and prosperity. Share, my lord, your good fortune with whom you will; while it lasts, you will want no friends; but if any adverse day happens to you, and I live to see it, you will find, that I think myself obliged to be your friend and advocate. This is talking in a strange dialect to the first man of the nation, by a private person: but to desire only a little, exalts a man's condition to a level with those who want a great deal. I beg your lordship's pardon, and am, with great respect,

MY LORD,
Your lordship's most obedient
and most humble servant,
RICHARD STEELE."

This letter, which contains a manly avowal of his principles, his views, and even of his suspicions with regard to the exalted personage whom he was addressing, throws much light upon the character and conduct of our author. If it prove his temerity, and his neglect of self-interest and aggrandizement, it likewise displays his intrepidity in defending the rights of his country, and in daring to unveil the ambitious schemes of rank and power.

The fetters which enchained him being thus broken, he lost no time in becoming a candidate

Digitized by Google

for a seat in the House of Commons; convinced that the attainment of this situation was the only probable mode of thwarting the pernicious views of his political opponents. With the same intention of exposing what he deemed the unpatriotic designs of administration, he wrote his famous Guardian, N° 128, dated August the 7th, 1713, in which, in a letter whose signature is *English Tory*, he insists upon the policy, and indeed absolute necessity, of demolishing the fortifications of Dunkirk. To this he was stimulated by a well-founded apprehension of the danger accruing to England from this strong fortress, but more particularly by a recent petition from the magistrates of Dunkirk, who, in defiance of the treaty of Utrecht, and it was generally supposed at that time with the connivance of the ministry, had petitioned her majesty, that she would have the goodness to dispense with the execution of that article of the treaty which demanded the demolition of the fortifications and harbour of that town.

In the course of this letter, he had thrice emphatically said, *The British nation* EXPECT *the immediate demolition of Dunkirk*, an expression which his enemies, with the utmost virulence and malignity, endeavoured to convert into a charge of disloyalty and treason. They construed the

Digitized by Google

word *expect*, as threatening her majesty, if she failed to comply with the wishes of the country; and they called loudly for the most exemplary punishment, on so gigantic an offender. It is melancholy to reflect, that the Examiner, written at this period by some of the first literary characters in the kingdom, should be pre-eminent in abuse; but the rancour of politics too frequently annihilates all urbanity, decency, and candour, and lays bare the worst and vilest passions of the human heart. Not content with libelling the private character of our author, and stooping to ridicule his poverty and distresses, the Examiner actually proceeds to declare, that should the Queen pardon the supposed delinquent, he would exert every nerve to render that pardon ineffectual.

When men of the first-rate talents, when Atterbury, Bolingbroke, and Swift, could thus degrade themselves, through the influence of party spirit, it sheds distinguished honour on the memory of Steele, on his magnanimity and moderation, that we are able to record his utter contempt of such conduct, and his entire forbearance of similar retaliation. He answered their malevolent attack, their false and exaggerated statements, with the temper of a man conscious of upright intention, and therefore under no necessity of wielding weapons which always

Digitized by Google

disgrace the hand that employs them. He immediately addressed a letter to the Bailiff of Stockbridge in Dorsetshire, for which Borough he was returned a member, and included this epistle in the Guardian, together with the acrimonious comment of his adversaries, refuting their charges and constructions by arguments at once clear, dispassionate and convincing.

This number of the Guardian, which brought on him such a torrent of abuse, was published but the day before the dissolution of Parliament; and the periodical paper in which it was inserted, being soon afterwards discontinued, was almost immediately followed by *The Englishman*, a publication whose chief purport was to illustrate and defend the measures and principles of the Whigs, and to point out the infinite importance of the protestant succession to the peace and welfare of the kingdom.

With views of a similar kind, and whilst yet employed on the composition of *The Englishman*, he was induced, through the suggestions of his friend Mr. More of the Inner Temple, (a gentleman well versed in the laws and constitution of his country, and who offered his assistance in the legal and technical part) to print a pamphlet entitled "*The Crisis;* or, A discourse, representing, from the most authentic records, the just causes of the late happy revolution, and the several set-

Digitized by Google

tlements of the crown of England and Scotland on her majesty; and, on the demise of her majesty without issue, upon the most illustrious Princess Sophia, Electress and Duchess Dowager of Hanover, and the heirs of her body, being Protestants, by previous acts of both parliaments of the late kingdoms of England and Scotland, and confirmed by the Parliament of Great Britain. With some seasonable remarks on the danger of a Popish Successor."

I have given the title of this treatise, which is dedicated to the Clergy, at full length, as it immediately led to the most important event in the political life of our author.

Convinced that both our civil and religious liberties depended upon the practical acknowledgment of those principles which produced the revolution, and the act of succession in the House of Hanover; believing these to be on the eve of destruction, through the machinations of those who wished to establish a popish monarch on the throne; and persuaded that the war had been terminated prematurely by the Tories, and with such advantage to France and Spain, that the result of our numerous victories had been weakly thrown away; Steele endeavours in this pamphlet, though too often with unnecessary warmth, to rouse the nation to a due sense of its danger.

Digitized by Google

Conscious, however, of the acrimony and vindictive spirit of his opponents, and not willing to incur punishment which in such hands he knew would be inflicted with the utmost rigour of the law, he took the opinion of his friends upon every page of the work. "When The Crisis," says he, "was written, I, who was to answer for it with my all, would not venture upon my own single jugment; therefore I caused it to be printed, and left one copy with Mr. Addison, another with Mr. Leechmore, another with Mr. Minshull, and another with Mr. Hoadley. From these corrected copies The Crisis became the piece it is. When I thought it my duty, I thank God I had no further consideration for myself, than to do it in a lawful and proper way, so as to give no disparagement to a glorious cause, from my indiscretion or want of judgment. I was willing to ripen the question of the succession upon my own head." *

Notwithstanding this precaution, notwithstanding the correction and approval of such dispassionate judges as Addison and Hoadley, the clamour raised against this production, by the ministry and its friends, was unbounded. They termed it a seditious and inflammatory libel; and

* Vide Apology.

Digitized by Google

Swift, in his Examiner, was more than usually abusive, and predicted our author's expulsion from the House.

Such was the temper of mind, and such the enmity of a very powerful party, the majority of both houses, when the meeting of the new parliament took place in the commencement of March, 1714. Unshaken by the storm which raged around him, and determined in his opposition to a party whose measures he deemed ruinous to his country, Steele seized the earliest opportunity of avowing his sentiments; and on the first day, immediately after Sir Thomas Hanmer had been proposed as Speaker of the House, he rose, and in the following very emphatic terms expressed his assent, and his close union with that gentleman in principle and politics.

"At the close of the last parliament," he observed, "her Majesty was graciously pleased to declare from the throne, that the late rejected Bill of Commerce, between Great Britain and France, should be offered to this House. That declaration was certainly made, that every gentleman who should have the honour to be returned hither might make himself master of that important question. It is demonstration, that it was a most pernicious bill; and no one can have a greater merit to this house, than he by whose weight

Digitized by Google

and influence that pernicious bill was thrown out. I rise up to do him honour; and distinguish myself, by giving him my vote, for that his inestimable service to his country.

"It will be impossible for the reader," continues he, "to conceive how this speech was received, unless he has happened to have been at a *cock-match*, and has seen the triumph and exultation that has been raised, when a *volatile*, whose fall was some way gainful to some of the company, has been nicked. At mentioning the Bill of Commerce, the cry began; at calling it pernicious, it increased; at the words, *do him honour*, it grew insupportably loud."

After this decisive mark of hostility to the measures of government, much time was not suffered to elapse before the vengeance of offended power overtook our author; and on March the 12th, 1714, Mr. John Hungerford brought a complaint before the House, against certain paragraphs inserted in two numbers of the periodical paper entitled *The Englishman*, and in a pamphlet called *The Crisis*, published under the name of Richard Steele, and calculated to promote sedition, to asperse the character of her Majesty, and arraign the conduct of her administration. In consequence of this accusation, Steele was ordered to attend the House on the 13th, being the day fol-

Digitized by Google

lowing; when, after hearing the obnoxious paragraphs read, he rose and requested that a sufficient length of time might be allowed him for the purpose of making his defence. This occasioned a warm debate, the result of which was, however, an acquiescence with his wishes; and Thursday the 18th was the day appointed for his answer to the charge preferred.

In the mean time, on Monday the 15th, he moved, as necessary to his defence, *That an humble address be presented to her Majesty, that she would be pleased to give directions, that the several representations of her Majesty's engineers, and others who have had the care and inspection of the demolition of Dunkirk, and all orders and instructions given thereupon, be laid before the House.* This motion, the success of which was so essential to his defence, passed in the negative; and on Thursday the 18th, Mr. Foley, the accuser, appeared in his place, and demanded that the business appointed for the day might be entered upon. Steele, who had taken his station near the bar, between his friends Mr. Stanhope and Mr. Robert Walpole, then rose, and, with the occasional assistance of Addison, who sat near with a view to prompt him if necessary, made a very able, and, what ought to have been, a very satisfactory defence. He spoke for three hours, and minutely

Digitized by Google

discussed the import of the different paragraphs complained of. He then withdrew; and Mr. Foley, rising, said, that "without amusing the house with long speeches, it was evident the writings complained of were seditious and scandalous, injurious to her Majesty's government, the church, and the universities;" and immediately called for the question. A very interesting debate, however, ensued, and was supported until eleven at night. Robert Walpole, Esq. his brother Horace, Lord Finch, Lord Lumley, and Lord Hinchinbroke, defended Steele with much elegance and force of argument; but the influence of ministry prevailed, and a majority of 245 against 152, "Resolved, that a printed pamphlet, intituled *The Englishman*, being the close of the paper so called, and one other pamphlet intituled *The Crisis*, written by RICHARD STEELE, ESQ. a member of this House, are scandalous and seditious libels, highly reflecting upon her Majesty, upon the nobility, clergy, gentry, and universities of this kingdom; maliciously insinuating, that the protestant succession in the House of Hanover is in danger under her Majesty's administration, and tending to alienate her Majesty's good subjects, and to create jealousies and divisions among them.

"Resolved, that RICHARD STEELE, ESQ. for his

Digitized by Google

offence in writing and publishing the said scandalous and seditious libels, be expelled this House."

Such was the issue of Steele's opposition to the Tory ministry. That he acted from the most patriotic views, from the most disinterested love for his country, and solely with the generous intention of protecting its constitution and laws, there is no reason to doubt. Nor is there any question, but he sincerely believed at the time, that the measures of the Tory administration were intended and calculated to overthrow the act of settlement, and to operate in favour of the exiled family. In this belief he was strengthened by some of the first characters in the kingdom, whether considered in a literary or political light. Addison and Hoadley, Halifax and Somers, entertained similar sentiments, and apprehended similar danger.

Time has, in some measure, developed the views of this turbulent reign, and the intrigues of many of its ambitious ministers. It now clearly appears, that the suspicions of Steele and his friends were not unfounded, so far as they attached to Bolingbroke and his agents. From an impartial retrospect of the transactions of that period, there can be little hesitation in ascribing to this brilliant, but unprincipled character, the daring

Digitized by Google

design of superseding the protestant succession, and re-establishing the Stuarts; and the bitter animosity and open rupture which latterly existed between him and the Earl of Oxford, were, in a great degree, owing to this nobleman's knowledge of St. John's pernicious schemes. In a letter to the Elector, dated May the 4th, 1714, the Earl writes, "that he never thought matters would have been pushed so far; that he was apprehensive of his own speedy disgrace; that he had been desired to enter into the views of the Pretender; and that he found the Queen more determined than ever to strengthen the interests of her brother, and to secure the throne for him." *

Of this minister, when calumny and the prejudices of faction had nearly worn away, the general opinion became extremely favourable. He certainly was a man of great firmness and integrity; with the exception of some errors of the judgment rather than of the heart, a friend to the best interests of his country; and, had he not been opposed by the restless jealousy and never-ceasing machinations of Bolingbroke, would probably have proved one of the most useful ministers that the crown and people ever possessed. Even Steelo

* Hanover Papers, 1714.

Digitized by Google

in the course of a very few years, had reason to estimate the character of this nobleman much higher than he once thought ever could be justifiable, and sincerely repented of the virulence he had occasionally made use of in opposing his administration. This avowal, with the utmost candour, and with a manly spirit of contrition, he addressed to the Earl himself, in the following letter written in the year 1719, when our author was opposing the Peerage Bill; and which, whether its composition or its sentiments be considered, merits very high praise. It displays, indeed, a most amiable disposition, and great goodness of heart.

"To the Earl of Oxford.

MY LORD,

I AM very glad of the occasion wherein I have the good fortune to think the same way with your Lordship, because I have very long suffered a great deal of pain in reflecting upon a certain virulence with which my zeal has heretofore transported me to treat your lordship's person and character. I do protest to you, excepting in the first smart of my disgrace and expulsion out of the House of Commons, I never writ any thing that ought to displease you, but with a reluctant heart, and in opposition to much good will and

Digitized by Google

esteem for your many great and uncommon talents. And I take the liberty to say, thus publicly to yourself, what I have often said to others on the subject of my behaviour to you; I never had any other reason to lessen my Lord of Oxford, than that which Brutus had to stab Cæsar—the love of my country. Your lordship will, I hope, believe there cannot be a more voluntary unrestrained reparation made to a man, than that I make to you, in begging your pardon thus publicly, for every thing I have spoken or written to your disadvantage, foreign to the argument and cause which I was then labouring to support. You will please to believe, that I could not be so insensible, as not to be touched with the generosity of part of your conduct towards me, or have omitted to acknowledge it accordingly, if I had not thought that your very virtue was dangerous; and that it was, as the world then stood, absolutely necessary to depreciate so adventurous a genius, surrounded with so much power as your lordship then had. I transgressed, my lord, against you, when you could make twelve peers in a day; I ask your pardon when you are a private nobleman; and, as I told you when I resigned the Stamp-office, I wished you all prosperity consistent with the public good; so now I congratulate you upon the plea-

Digitized by Google

sure you must needs have in looking back upon the true fortitude with which you have passed through the dangers, arising from the rage of the people, and the envy of the rest of the world."

Pope, who was well acquainted with the abilities and moral virtues of Lord Oxford, has consecrated his memory, by one of the finest productions of his genius; by lines which, probably, when every other record has dropped into oblivion, will still shed lustre round the name of Harley. The following passage paints strongly, yet without flattery, the prevailing feature of his character:

"———Sure, if aught below the seats divine
Can touch immortals, 'tis a soul like thine:
A soul supreme, in each hard instance try'd,
Above all pain, all passion, and all pride,
The rage of pow'r, the blast of public breath,
The lust of lucre, and the dread of death."

"Strength of mind," remarks Dr. Warton on this passage, "appears to have been the predominant characteristic of Lord Oxford; of which he gave the most striking proofs, when he was stabbed, displaced, imprisoned. These noble and nervous lines allude to those circumstances: of his fortitude and firmness, another striking proof remains, in a letter which the Earl wrote

Digitized by Google

from the Tower to a friend who advised him to meditate an escape, and which is worthy of the greatest hero of antiquity. This extraordinary letter I had the pleasure of reading, by the favour of the Earl's excellent grand-daughter, the late Duchess Dowager of Portland, who inherited that love of literature and science, so peculiar to her ancestors and family.

"I am well informed that Bolingbroke was greatly mortified at Pope's bestowing these praises on his old antagonist, whom he mortally hated; yet I have seen two original letters, in the hands of the same Duchess of Portland, of Lord Bolingbroke to Lord Oxford, full of the most fulsome flattery of the man whom he affected to despise, and of very idle and profane applications of scripture." *

The expulsion of Steele from the House, an event which he in some degree expected, neither oppressed his spirits nor diminished the fertility of his pen. He very soon appeared before the public, with proposals for a *History of the Duke of Marlborough*, to commence from the date of his Grace's commission of Captain-general and Plenipotentiary, and to end with the expiration of those commissions. This work was

* Warton's Pope, vol. ii. p. 306.

Digitized by Google

to have been printed in folio by Tonson; but either from want of encouragement, of leisure, or inclination, it was never executed. "The long retardation of the Life of the Duke of Marlborough shews, with strong conviction," observes Johnson, "how little confidence can be placed in posthumous renown. When he died, it was soon determined that his story should be delivered to posterity; and the papers supposed to contain the necessary information were delivered to Lord Molesworth, who had been his favourite in Flanders. When Molesworth died, the same papers were transferred, with the same design, to Sir Richard Steele, who in some of his exigences put them in pawn. They then remained with the old duchess, who in her will assigned the task to Glover and Mallet, with a reward of a thousand pounds, and a prohibition to insert any verses. Glover rejected, I suppose with disdain, the legacy, and devolved the whole work upon Mallet, who had from the late Duke of Marlborough a pension to promote his industry, and who talked of the discoveries which he had made; but left not, when he died, any historical labours behind him." *

How far Steele was calculated to excel as the

* Johnson's Lives of the Poets, vol. iii. p. 351.

Digitized by Google

biographer of Marlborough cannot now be ascertained. That his work would have been partial, however, and strongly tinctured with his political opinions and prejudices, there is but too much reason to suppose. It is without regret, therefore, that we behold him relinquishing the task, to resume a mode of composition more consonant to his habits and genius. On February the 14th, 1714, he commenced a periodical paper, entitled, *The Lover*, written in imitation of the Tatler, and published thrice a week. It was continued until May the 27th, 1714, and includes forty numbers. The delineation of the Lover seems founded on, and a continuation of, our author's character of Cynthio, in the first number of the Tatler, and is not without its portion of originality and spirit.

Politics, however, still occupied the greater part of Steele's time; and on April the 22d, 1714, he began a paper called *The Reader*, in opposition to the *Examiner*, which continued with unabated zeal to blazon forth the virtues of the Tory administration, and to calumniate the merit of its opponents. The Reader, which, as well as the Lover, had the occasional assistance of Addison, reached but to nine numbers, and ceased on May the 10th, 1714.

A short time previous to these periodical papers, he had written and printed *A Letter to*

Digitized by Google

Sir Miles Wharton concerning occasional Peers. Twelve had been created in one day, with the view of obtaining a majority in the upper house; but Sir Miles, conscious of the conditions annexed to the title, had refused the proffered dignity. To annihilate the influence arising from these newly created peers, Steele proposes in this epistle, that a bill be brought into the house to prevent any peer from voting until the expiration of three years from the date of his patent. In order to enforce the propriety of the plan, he introduces some observations, which pointedly allude to the singular events then passing on the public stage. "When the minds of men," observes he, "are prejudiced, wonderful effects may be wrought against common sense. One weak step, in trying a fool for what he said in the pulpit, with all the pomp that could be used to take down a more dangerous and powerful man than ever England yet has seen, cost the most able ministry that England was ever honoured with, its being. The judgment of the house of lords was by this means insulted and evaded; and the anarchical fury ran so high, that Harry Sacheverell swelling, and Jack Higgins laughing, marched through England in a triumph more than military."

Digitized by Google

The number of Steele's productions during the year 1714, was uncommonly great. Besides the *Lover* and *Reader*, he published a pamphlet, called *French Faith represented in the present State of Dunkirk; a Letter to the Examiner in Defence of Mr. Steele.* Dunkirk had a little before this period been delivered to the French, who were constructing a new harbour at Mardyke: a circumstance which, not without reason, excited the apprehensions of our author.

Steele was a sincere friend to the church of England; and, though a watchful guardian over her rights and privileges, a bitter enemy to every species of intolerance and persecution: when, therefore, a bill was brought into the house to prevent the growth of schism, and which was upon a plan so bigoted and illiberal as not only to preclude dissenters from teaching publicly in schools, but actually went so far as to deprive them of the power of educating their own children, he wrote *A Letter to a Member of Parliament*, dated May the 28th, 1714, in which he points out, in a very spirited style, and with much sound argument, the impolicy, the injustice, and the danger of such an arbitrary act. He has called forth in this little piece all the powers of his wit, eloquence, and humour, and in the following pas-

Digitized by Google

sage has placed the supposed consequences of the bill in a very ludicrous light.

"When we consider the putting this law in execution," remarks he, "there cannot be a more pleasant image presented to the imagination, than a poor schismatic school-mistress brought before a zealous angry squire for transgressing this act, and teaching one presbyterian, little more than an animal, in what the letter D differed from the letter B; maliciously insinuating to another schismatic, aged five years old, without licence from the ordinary, that O is round; and not contenting herself with merely shewing to the said schismatics the letters of a certain book covered with horn, but instructing the said heretics to put them together, and make words of them; as appears by the affidavit of one who heard an infant schismatic say, o—f, of; another, o—b, ob. Prodigious! that a church adorned with so many excellent and learned members, supplied by two famous universities, both endowed with ample revenues, immunities, and jurisdictions, should be affronted with the offer of being reinforced with penal laws against the combination of women and children! You might with the same propriety provide against schismatic nurses."

The bill, after a very warm debate, passed

Digitized by Google

both houses by a trifling majority, but was happily rendered nugatory by the death of the Queen.

To unveil the errors and idolatry of popery, and to excite an abhorrence of its gross rites and superstitions, especially at a period when the interest of the pretender was considered as greatly upon the increase, were the motives which induced our author to publish this year his treatise entitled, *The Romish Ecclesiastical History of late Years*, and in 1715 to recal attention to the subject by reprinting an octavo volume called *The State of the Roman Catholic Religion throughout the World, written for the Use of Pope Innocent the XIth.* This was a translation from the Italian, and the dedication has been ascribed to Hoadley Bishop of Winchester.

Whilst thus employed in promoting, as he deemed, the best interests of the church and state, an event occurred which very soon produced an entire revolution in his circumstances and situation, and enabled him, for a time at least, to triumph over all his enemies. On August the 1st, 1714, Queen Anne, after a lingering illness, expired; and on the accession of George the First, Steele, who was made known to his Majesty as the firm friend of his illustrious house,

Digitized by Google

and a powerful writer in support of the protestant succession, was immediately appointed surveyor to the royal stables of Hampton Court, and placed in the commission of the peace for the county of Middlesex.

Steele had in his various writings been of essential service to the theatre, by recommending the best performers to public notice, by pointing out with taste and discrimination their peculiar merits, and by claiming for them, through the medium of his most popular lucubrations, the encouragement and support due to their exertions. When therefore the licence of the managers of the Drury-lane company expired on the death of the Queen, they instantly applied to our author for his interest toward obtaining its renewal, requesting at the same time that he would honour them so far as to procure the insertion of his own name with theirs in the same commission.

The account which Colley Cibber, who was then one of the managers, has given of this transaction, displays the generosity, the amiable and open temper, of Steele in such a peculiarly pleasing light, and with such näivete of manner, that I am certain of conferring an obligation upon my readers by presenting it in his own words. After assuring us that the application had been made

Digitized by Google

to Steele, not merely from his influence at court, but principally, from a sense of the great obligation the stage was under to his writings, not a comedian of the company, probably, of any merit having failed to receive benefit and instruction from his *Tatlers*, "many nights," continues Cibber, "had our house been filled by the influence and credit of his pen. Obligations of this kind, from a gentleman with whom they all had the pleasure of a personal intimacy, the managers thought could not be more justly returned, than by shewing him some warm instance of their desire to have him at the head of them. This they told him would put it still farther in his power to support the stage in that reputation to which his lucubrations had already so much contributed; and that therefore he had better pretensions to partake of its various successes than any other person whatsoever. He was highly pleased with the offer, and his spirits took such a lively turn upon it, that had we been all his own sons, no unexpected act of filial duty could have more endeared us to him. The licence being obtained, the managers agreed to give Sir Richard 700*l.* per annum, as they had done before to Mr. Collier. Soon after this, the house in Lincoln's-inn-fields being finished by the old patentee, who had been silenced, he procured, by

Digitized by Google

the interest of Mr. Craggs the younger, his suspension to be taken off: upon which that playhouse being opened, proved at first a great drawback upon the profits of the old house: on this occasion the managers remonstrated to Sir Richard, that as he now stood in Collier's place, his pension of 700*l.* per annum was liable to the same conditions; which were, that it was only payable during their continuance to be the only company permitted to act; but in case another was set up against them, this pension was to be liquidated into an equal share with them, and which they now hoped he would be contented with. While they were offering to proceed, Sir Richard stopt them short, by assuring them, that as he came among them by their invitation, he should always think himself obliged to come into any measures for their use and service; that to be a burthen to their industry would be more disagreeable to him, than it could be to them; and as he had always taken a delight in his endeavours for their prosperity, he should be still ready on their own terms to continue them. Every one," proceeds Mr. Cibber, "who knew Sir Richard in his prosperity (before the effects of his good nature had brought him to distress,) knows that this was his manner of dealing with his friends in business. Another instance of the

same nature will immediately fall in my way. When we proposed to put this agreement in writing, he desired us not to hurry ourselves; for that he was advised, upon the late desertion of our actors,* to get our licence, which now subsisted only during pleasure, enlarged into a more ample and durable authority; and which he said he had reason to think would be more easily obtained, if we were willing that a patent for the same purpose might be granted to him only for his life and three years afterwards, which he would then assign over to us. This was a prospect beyond our hopes, and what we had long wished for. For though I cannot say we had ever occasion to grieve at the personal severities of any lord chamberlain; yet the several officers under them often treated us with all the insolence of office. But a patent, we knew, would free us from so abject a state of dependance. Accordingly we desired Sir Richard to lose no time.—A few days after Sir Richard told us, that his Majesty being apprized that others had a joint power with him in the licence, it was expected that we should under our hands signify, that his petition for a patent was preferred by

* Several of their best actors went to the new house in Lincoln's-inn-fields.

Digitized by Google

the consent of us all; such an acknowledgment was immediately signed, and the patent thereupon passed the great seal.——The patent was received January 19th, 1718, and the patentee was to set out next morning for Boroughbridge. —So that the managers were forced, that very night, to draw up in a hurry, (till their counsel might more advisedly perfect it) his assignment to them of equal shares in the patent, with further conditions of partnership." *

The inaccuracy of this assignment was such, from the hasty mode in which it had been drawn and worded, that the whole of their property became, in direct opposition to their intentions, vested in Sir Richard; who, however, so far from taking any advantage of the mistake, readily agreed to a revision; and on paying 1200*l.* which sum was to be repaid to his executors on his death, he was entitled to an equal share in their property. In consequence of this contract he derived a clear income of 1000*l.* per annum from the theatre.

Steele was, immediately on his arrival at Boroughbridge in Yorkshire, chosen one of the representatives for that place, and took his seat in

* Cibber's Apology, 2d edit. ch. xv.—London, 1740, 8vo.

Digitized by Google

the first parliament of George the First, who, on April the 28th, 1715, upon our author's presenting an address from the lieutenancy, conferred upon him the honour of knighthood. It was on this occasion that Sir Richard, wishing to distinguish himself by the celebration of his majesty's birthday, who had entered into his 56th year, entertained above two hundred gentlemen and ladies at his house. Delicacies of every kind, pyramids of every species of sweatmeat, and the most generous wines, burgundy, champagne, &c. &c. were given, and were ushered in by a prologue written by Mr. Tickell, and spoken by Mrs. Younger. After this collation, dances commenced in the concert room; an Ode of Horace, with several songs written for the occasion, were set to music and performed, and the whole concluded with an epilogue composed by Sir Richard himself, and recited by Mr. Wilks.* In this epilogue he alludes with much pleasantry and good humour to some of the principal events of his life.

"The sage whose guests you are to-night is known
To watch the public weal, *though not his own:*
Still have his thoughts uncommon schemes pursu'd,
And teem'd with projects for his country's good.

* Vide Weekly Miscellany, May 28th, 1715.

Digitized by Google

Early in youth his enemies have shown
How narrowly he miss'd the chemic stone:*
Not Friar Bacon promis'd England more;
Our artist, lavish of his fancied ore,
Could he have brought his great design to pass,
Had wall'd us round with gold instead of brass.
That project sunk, you saw him entertain
A notion more chimerical and vain:
To give chaste morals † to ungovern'd youth,
To gamesters honesty, to statesmen truth;
To make you virtuous all; a thought more bold,
Than that of changing dross and lead to gold.
But now to greater actions he aspir'd,
For still his country's good our champion fir'd;
In treaties vers'd, in politics grown wise,
He look'd on Dunkirk ‡ with suspicious eyes;—
In a few months he is not without hope,
But 'tis a secret, to convert the Pope:
Of this, however, he'll inform you better,
Soon as his holiness receives his letter." §. ‖.

Sir Richard now saw those who had formerly calumniated and oppressed him driven from power, impeached, and trembling for the result; and it is the only blot, perhaps, in his political

* It is well known that Steele once entertained hopes of being successful in the pursuit of the philosopher's stone; his laboratory was at Poplar, and is now converted into a garden-house.

† Tatler, Spectator, Guardian.

‡ The importance of Dunkirk considered.

§ The dedication to "An Account of the state of the Roman Catholic Religion throughout the Word."

‖ Vide Town-Talk, No. 4, p. 55, Nichols's Edition.

Digitized by Google

character, that, instead of that mildness and forbearance which philosophy should have taught him to exercise toward those who had fallen into sudden adversity, and were no longer capable of thwarting his views, or injuring his promotion, the spirit of retaliation should have occupied his breast, and induced him to revile those as traitors and parricides, who were waiting the event of a trial by the laws of their country, and against whom, at such a period, to excite prejudice and aversion must be deemed at once vindictive and ungenerous. Such was, unhappily, the tendency of the republication of his pamphlets this year against the late ministry. They appeared in one volume octavo, under the title of *The Political Writings of Sir Richard Steele*, and among them he now first printed his *Apology*, with this motto, *Fabula quanta fui!* and such also was the purport of *The Englishman*, the second volume of which he began in June, 1715. Shortly after this he published *A Letter from the Earl of Mar to the King, before his Majesty's Arrival in England*, with some remarks on my lord's subsequent conduct; and on December the 17th, 1715, began a new weekly paper called *The Town-Talk, in a Series of Letters to a Lady in the Country*, which, extending only to nine numbers, finished on Monday, February the 13th, 1716. It appears

Digitized by Google

to have been for the greater part a collection of genuine letters addressed to his lady, then in the country, and embracing the fashionable and political topics of the day, and occasionally imparting his sentiments of the stage and its productions. The origin of this and some other periodical publications, which had still a shorter date, was probably owing to the exigence of the moment; for on February the 6th, 1716, whilst yet continuing the Town-Talk, he ushered into the world, once a fortnight, another paper under the title of the Tea-Table; this dropping on March the 2d, after having only reached three numbers, he commenced a third on the sixth of the same month, styled *Chit-Chat*, and which, attaining the same age as to numbers, expired on March the sixteenth.

Sir Richard was now high in the confidence of administration. In August, 1715, a few months after the acquirement of his title, he received from Sir Robert Walpole, five hundred pounds for special services; * and in 1717, upon the sub-

* In a table of monies expended by Sir Robert Walpole, among other articles there is one for special services, in which is the following article:—August the 27th, 1715: 500*l.* to Leonard Welstead, Esq. but this gentleman some years afterwards declared, that he received the money for Sir Richard Steele, and paid it to him.

Biographia Britannica, Vol. 6.

Digitized by Google

pression of the rebellion in the north, he was sent into Scotland as one of the commissioners for the forfeited estates. Here, though from the nature of his employment he might justly have expected no very pleasant reception, he experienced so much hospitality, respect, and attention from the highest classes of society, that he was induced to try whether an ecclesiastical, as well as civil, union might not be effected between the two kingdoms. In the pursuit of this desirable, but, I apprehend, unattainable object, the restoration of the ancient episcopacy of Scotland, he had frequent conferences with many of the presbyterian ministers. Among these he was particularly struck with the singular and original character of a Mr. Hart. He was a man of great humour and very facetious manners, and though particularly mild and good tempered in all the relations of Domestic life, his discourses from the pulpit were usually of the most terrific kind. He loved to preach what he termed *The Terrors of the Law*, and had been for some years in the habit of weekly consigning his affrighted flock to all the horrors of eternal damnation; a practice which obtained him from Steele the appellation of *The Hangman of the Gospel*.

"It was a very common mode with the Scotch clergy in that age," observes Dr. Bisset, "when,

Digitized by Google

in point of enlargement of mind, and still more in point of civilized manners, they were very much inferior to those of the present time, although they and their hearers lived on the most friendly and familiar terms all the rest of the week, to send them regularly to the devil every Sunday. It happened once, that one of those denouncers of punishment had been preaching for a neighbouring pastor, who had not accustomed his flock to such terrible anathemas. The worthy parson having, as was usual with him at home, declared to the people, that they were guilty of every sin and of every impiety, (a mode of preaching that certainly saved a great deal of trouble) concluded his sermon with consigning them without distinction, to the devil and his angels. The people, considering the sentence as too severe, applied to their own minister, to intercede with his friend to preach in the evening, and deliver them from that dreadful state in which he had left them in the morning.

"The other, who was really a very good-natured man, complied; and after telling them, that the punishment he had threatened was only against enormous sinners, but that he was convinced they were believers and saints, with the same unlimited liberality with which he had

Digitized by Google

given them to Satan, adjudged them all a place in heaven, and sent them home completely satisfied."*

Steele, who loved to see the characters of the various classes in low life unfettered by authority, and indulging in all the festivities of mirth and caprices of humour, and willing whilst in Scotland to ascertain the genius and manners of the populace, one day, during his residence at Edinburgh, made a splendid feast; and whilst his servants were astonished at the magnitude and magnificence of the preparations, and wondering for what great personages they were intended, he ordered them to go into the streets, collect all the beggars and poor people they should meet, and invite them immediately to his house. In consequence of this proceeding, Sir Richard soon mustered fifty beggars, and many poor decayed tradesmen, and, presiding at their head, plied them so briskly with whisky punch and wine, that, forgetting all their cares, and free from all restraint, they gave loose to every peculiarity of their respective characters; and a display of native though rude wit, of merriment and jollity, ensued, which soon set the table in a roar,

* Bisset's Life of Steele, prefixed to his edition of the Spectator, vol. i. p. 139.

Digitized by Google

and presented a scene at once highly ludicrous and truly comic. When the frolic was ended, Sir Richard declared, that besides the pleasure of filling so many empty bellies, he had learned from them humour enough to form a good comedy.*

It is most probable that our good-natured knight was as jolly and intemperate upon this occasion as any of his guests. It was one of the foibles indeed of Steele, that he seldom was partial in his convivial moments, whatever might be the rank of his companions, to the suggestions of temperance. His gaiety, his humour, and his wit were inexhaustible, and sometimes led him into follies of which he heartily repented the succeeding morning. A curious anecdote of this kind is related by Dr. John Hoadley. "My father," says he, "on a pressing invitation, once attended, when Bishop of Bangor, one of the whig meetings at the Trumpet in Sheer-lane, where Steele rather exposed himself in his zeal, having the double duty of the day upon him, as well to celebrate the immortal memory of King William, it being the fourth of November, as to drink his friend Addison up to conversation

* Cibber's Lives of the Poets, vol. iv. p. 116, and Biographia Britannica, vol. vi.

Digitized by Google

pitch, whose phlegmatic constitution was hardly warmed for society by that time Steele was not fit for it. Two remarkable circumstances happened.

"John Sly, the hatter, of facetious memory, was in the house; and when pretty mellow took it into his head to come into the company on his knees, with a tankard of ale in his hand, to drink it off to the 'immortal memory,' and to retire in the same manner. Steele, sitting next my father, whispered him, 'Do laugh; 'tis humanity to laugh.'

"Sir Richard, being in the evening too much in the same condition, was put into a chair, and sent home. Nothing would serve him but being carried to the Bishop of Bangor's, late as it was. However, the chairmen carried him home, and got him up stairs, when his great complaisance would wait on them down stairs again, which he did, and then was got quietly to bed. Next morning he was much ashamed, and sent the Bishop this distich:

> Virtue with so much ease on Bangor sits,
> All faults he pardons, though he none commits.

"On such another occasion the waiters were hoisting him into a hackney-coach with some labour and pains, when a tory mob was just

Digitized by Google

passing by, and their cry was, 'Down with the Rump, &c.'—'Up with the Rump,' cried Sir Richard to the waiters, 'or I shall not get home to-night'."

It is probable that Sir Richard, during his stay in Scotland, travelled for his amusement through several parts of that romantic country; for in the third volume of the Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border, lately published by Mr. Scott, the following circumstance is said to have occurred to him near Hoddom Castle, on the banks of the river Annan.*

Hoddom Castle, which is delightfully situated, is an ancient structure, built between the years 1437 and 1484, by John Lord Herries, of Herries, a powerful baron, who possessed extensive domains in Dumfries-shire.

"On the top of a small, but conspicuous hill, near to Hoddom Castle, there is a square tower, built of hewn stone, over the door of which are carved the figures of a dove and a serpent, and betwixt them the word *Repentance.* Hence the building, though its proper name is Trailtrow, is more frequently called the Tower of Repentance. It was anciently used as a beacon; and the bor-

* This incident, however, may have happened to our author merely in travelling to or from Scotland by the Carlisle road, which passes immediately through Annandale.

Digitized by Google

der laws direct a watch to be maintained, with a fire-pan and bell, to give the alarm when the English crossed, or approached, the river of Annan.

"A certain Lord Herries—about the date of the transaction tradition is silent—was famous among those who used to rob and steal (*convey*, the wise it call.) This lord returning from England with many prisoners, whom he had unlawfully enthralled, was overtaken by a storm, while passing the Solway Firth; and, in order to relieve his boat, he cut all their throats, and threw them into the sea. Feeling great qualms of conscience, he built this square tower, carving over the door, which is about half-way up the building, and had formerly no stair to it, the figures above-mentioned, of a dove and a serpent, emblems of remorse and grace, and the motto '*Repentance.*'

"It is said," proceeds Mr. Scott, "that Sir Richard Steele, while riding near this place, saw a shepherd boy reading his bible, and asked him what he learned from it? 'The way to heaven,' answered the boy. 'And can your shew it to me?' said Sir Richard, in banter. 'You must go by that tower,' replied the shepherd; and he pointed to the Tower of *Repentance.*"

On this tradition relative to Lord Herries,

Charles Kirkpatrick Sharpe, Esq. the present possessor of Hoddom Castle, has constructed the following beautiful and pathetic fragment.

THE

LORD HERRIES HIS COMPLAINT.

A FRAGMENT.

" Bright shone the moon on Hoddom's wall,
Bright on Repentance Tower;
Mirk was the Lord of Hoddom's saul,
That chief sae sad and sour.

" He sat him on Repentance hicht,
And glowr'd upon the sea;
And sair and heavily he sicht,
But nae drap eased his bree.

" The night is fair, and calm the air,
No blasts disturb the tree;
Baith men and beast now tak their rest,
And a's at peace but be.

" Can wealth and power in princely bower,
Can beauty's rolling e'e,
Can friendship dear, wi' kindly tear,
Bring back my peace to me?

" No! lang lang maun the mourner pine,
And meikle penance dree,
Wha has a heavy heart like mine,
Ere light that heart can be.

Digitized by Google

" Under yon silver skimmering waves,
That saftly rise and fa',
Lie mouldering banes in sandy graves,
That fley my peace awa.

* * * * * * * * * * * *

" To help my boat I pierc'd the throat
Of him whom ane lo'ed dear;
Nought did I spare his yellow hair,
And e'en sae bright and clear.

" She sits her lane, and makith mane,
And sings a waefu' sang,
' Scotch rievers hae my darling ta'en;
O Willie tarries lang!'

" I plunged an auld man in the sea,
Whose locks were like the snaw;
His hairs sall serve for rapes to me,
In hell my soul to draw.

" Soon did thy smile, sweet baby, stint,
Torn frae the nurse's knee,
That smile, that might hae saften'd flint,
And still'd the raging sea.

" Alas, twelve precious lives were spilt,
My worthless spark to save;
Bet * had I fallen, withouten guilt,
Frae cradle to the grave.

" Repentance! signal of my bale,
Built of the lasting stane,
Ye long shall tell the bluidy tale,
When I am dead and gane.

* Bet——better.

Digitized by Google

"How Hoddom's lord, ye lang sall tell,
By conscience stricken sair,
In life sustain'd the pains of hell.
And perish'd in despair."

* * * * * * * * * * * * *

On Sir Richard's return to England, he conceived, with his usual enthusiasm, a project by which, as he credulously imagined, he should soon realize a splendid fortune. This was the invention of a FISH-POOL, for the conveyance of *live-salmon* from the coast of Ireland to the London market; where, at this time, they sold enormously dear, being generally purchased at the rate of five shillings a pound. He contrived, by means of a well-boat, to supply his fish with a continual stream of fresh water; and having obtained a patent, dated June the 10th, 1718, he confidently announced his hopes to the public, and declared that he only wanted that men should support his design, to be enabled to divide ten per cent six times a year, and consequently to acquire the possession of a greater income than any man living had merit enough to deserve.*

In spite of all the ridicule, however, which the promulgation of this scheme brought upon him, he was determined to carry his plan into

* Theatre, No. 28.

Digitized by Google

execution, and to prove the utility of his machine by the test of experiment. Accordingly, in conjunction with a Mr. Gillmore, a mathematician of some reputation, he was at considerable expence in constructing a vessel for the purpose; but alas! though his salmon were liberally supplied, whilst crossing the ocean, both with fresh water and air, they proved so averse to confinement that, battering themselves against the sides of the well, they were so much bruised in their passage as to be totally unfit for the market.

Our author was still more unfortunate during the ensuing year, in opposing one of the favourite measures of administration; an opposition which, in its consequences, involved him, though very undeservedly, in great penury and distress. The Earl of Sunderland had proposed an act called the PEERAGE BILL, whose purport was, to fix permanently the number of peers, and to restrain the king from any new creation of nobility, except upon the extinction of an old family. This, though approved of by the lords, was of course strongly objected to by the commons, who could not be expected to support a bill which would for ever exclude themselves and their posterity from all access to the honours of the upper house. Steele, who saw that the direct tendency of the act was to introduce a complete aristo

Digitized by Google

cracy, strenuously, both by his speeches and publications, defended the cause of the people; and in so doing unfortunately entangled himself in a controversy with his illustrious friend Addison. In order to rouse the attention of the people to the despotism of the intended alteration on the constitution, he published, March the 14th, 1719, the first number of a paper entitled *The Plebeian*. This was answered by Addison, as yet uninformed of its author, by a pamphlet under the appellation of the *Old Whig*. Steele replied, without any personality; but Addison, who had now learnt that Sir Richard was his opponent, forgot in his succeeding number his usual philosophy and calmness of temper, adopted several acrimonious expressions, and in a tone of contempt spoke of his long-tried companion and assistant under the degrading title of *Little Dicky whose trade it was to write pamphlets*. The rejoinder of Steele is, greatly to his credit, far from intemperate; he preserved his accustomed regard and veneration for his friend; and in the most gentle manner, and merely through the medium of a quotation from Cato, conveyed his disapprobation and reproof. "Every reader surely must regret," says the admirable Johnson, "that these two illustrious friends, after so many years passed in confidence and endearment, in unity

Digitized by Google

of interest, conformity of opinion, and fellowship of study, should finally part in acrimonious opposition. Such a controversy was *Bellum plusquam civile*, as Lucan expresses it. Why could not faction find other advocates? But, among the uncertainties of the human state, we are doomed to number the instabilities of friendship."* It is to be hoped, however, that in the short space which elapsed between this unhappy dispute and the death of Addison, the acrimony which it had engendered, and which surely in the bosoms of such men could not long exist, was entirely forgotten; and that the author of Cato in his last moments looked back upon his faithful associate with no emotions save those of genuine friendship and benevolence.

These six papers of Steele and Addison, namely, the four Plebeians, and the two Old Whigs, are well written, and convey much useful information, relative to the nature and spirit of our matchless constitution. The decision was in favour of Steele; for on December the 7th, 1719, on a motion in the house of commons for committing the Peerage Bill, it was carried in the negative by 269 against 117. Towards the close of this year, likewise, our author published

* Johnson's Lives of the Poets, vol. ii. p. 103.

Digitized by Google

a small pamphlet called *The Spinster*, intended as a defence, and an encouragement to the more frequent use of the woollen manufactures.

Though Sir Richard proved thus successful in protecting the integrity of the constitution, to his own personal interests the result was for a time extremely fatal. The court, irritated by his spirited opposition, and ascribing the failure of the bill in the lower house in a great measure to the influence and popularity of his writings, was determined to withdraw its protection, and to revoke the patent which had constituted him Governor of the Royal Company of Comedians. As no secret was made of this intention, and the Duke of Newcastle, then lord chamberlain, had menaced him with utter ruin, he thought it high time to exert every nerve for the prevention of so serious a diminution of his income; and as any immediate application to his majesty was, through the influence of his potent adversary, unattainable, he commenced, on the second of January, 1720, a periodical paper under the title of *The Theatre*. This was published twice a week; and its chief aim was, to vindicate himself and his brother managers, to display the utility of the stage, and to expose the severe persecution that he was under from his majesty's ministers. The effort was in vain; for in less than a month after-

Digitized by Google

the appearance of the first number, the order of revocation was carried into effect; and N° VIII, of the Theatre contains an expostulatory letter addressed to the chamberlain. No beneficial consequences arising from this application, Sir Richard soon after published *The State of the Case between the Lord Chamberlain of his Majesty's Household and the Governor of the Royal Company of Comedians*, and estimates his loss, in consequence of the deprivation of his patent, at nine thousand eight hundred pounds. He professes in this pamphlet never to have committed an act which could justly occasion this revocation, and charges the chamberlain with having declared, and without the assignment of any reason too, that he was determined upon his ruin: a declaration "which," as our author observes, "in a man in his circumstances against one in mine, is as great as the humour of Malagine in the comedy, who valued himself upon his activity in tripping up cripples. All this is done against a man to whom whig, tory, roman catholic, dissenter, native, foreigner, owe zeal and good will for good offices endeavoured toward every one of them in their civil rights, and their kind wishes for him are but a just return. But what ought to weigh most with his lordship the chamberlain, is my zeal for his majesty, of which I shall a

Digitized by Google

present say no more than that his lordship and many others may perhaps have done more for the House of Hanover than I have; but I am the only man in his majesty's dominions, who did all he could."*

The Theatre, which Steele conducted under the feigned name of *Sir John Edgar*, though undertaken at a period when its author was labouring under varied distresses, public and private, is neither void of vigour nor of amusement. It is, however, too much occupied, for the general reader, by the exposure of his injuries as a patentee, and by his observations on the famous South-sea scheme. Having reached twenty-eight numbers, it closed on April the 5th, 1720. Among its pages are to be found a few specimens of Sir Richard's poetry; and the eighteenth number is distinguished by some amatory lines, which, as they are written with much sweetness and delicacy both of sentiment and versification, are worthy of transcription.

THE LOVE-SICK MAID.

From place to place, forlorn I go,
With downcast eyes, a silent shade;
Forbidden to declare my woe;
To speak, till spoken to, afraid.

* State of the Case, p. 30.

Digitized by Google

Me to the youth, who caused my grief,
My too consenting looks betray;
He loves, but gives me no relief;
Why speaks not he who may? *

The difficulties into which Steele was now plunged, his loss of royal patronage, and the involved state of his domestic affairs, misfortunes which should have called forth alleviation rather than insult, brought upon him, during the publication of his Theatre, the brutal attacks of that coarse and ferocious critic *John Dennis*, a man whose envy was ever excited by genius and by virtue, and who delighted to render more bitter the cup of adversity. Fortunately his impotence was nearly equal to his malice, and the ridicule with which our author treated his malignant in-

* A similar union of timidity and passion, of beauty of expression and delicacy of feeling, occurs in the following pathetic lines by Moore.

L'AMOUR TIMIDE.

If in that breast, so good, so pure,
Compassion ever lov'd to dwell,
Pity the sorrows I endure,
The cause *I must not, dare not, tell.*

That grief that on my quiet preys,
That rends my heart, that checks my tongue,
I fear will last me all my days,
But feel it will not last me long.

Digitized by Google

vectives, whilst best calculated to repel the insult, tended, at the same time, by diverting his own thoughts, to mitigate those evils which the arm of power had wantonly inflicted. Dennis had in his abusive letters, which were entitled, *The Characters and Conduct of Sir John Edgar, called by himself Sole Monarch of the Stage in Drury-lane; and his Three Deputy Governors: In two Letters to Sir John Edgar*, pursued his usual plan, and attempted to libel the person as well as the character of Sir Richard, insinuating that he was ugly and ill made, and attacking with ludicrous animosity his "black peruke," and his "dusky countenance." To this meanness and scurrility Steele, in the eleventh number of his *Theatre*, with great good humour replies in the person of Sir John Edgar, observing that, "this treatment of a visage so well known is an impudence that transcends all example; and I have ordered new editions of his face, after KNELLER, THORNHILL, and RICHARDSON, to disabuse mankind in this particular. He is painted by the first *resolute*, by the second *thoughtful*, and by the third *indolent*. Sir GODFREY bewailed that CARRACIO was not living when he sate to him; and, when he took pencil in hand, repeated this sentence out of MR. STEELE'S Epistle to the Bailiff of Stockbridge: 'He is gone but a little way in the course of Virtue, who can-

not bear reproach for her sake.' You may observe a roughness in the portraiture, from the rigour of that thought, which has occasioned that most ladies choose Mr. Richardson's Work rather than Sir Godfrey's;" and to N° 18, in a still higher tone of ridicule, he has appended the following advertisement.

"An eminent Turkey merchant and an ingenious foreigner do hereby give notice, that if any person will discover the libeller or libellers, who has and have falsely and maliciously insinuated in their writings that SIR RICHARD STEELE is ugly, so as they may be prosecuted by law, shall have all fitting encouragements, the said gentlemen having lost considerable matches, by reason of the similitude of their persons to the said INJURED KNIGHT."*

The abuse of Dennis becomes more flagrant and detestable, when we have to record that he had been under considerable obligations to Steele, who once actually became bail for him, and was arrested as the consequence of his benevolence. The conduct of Dennis, on this occasion, paints with one stroke the feelings and disposition of the man. Being informed that Sir Richard had been arrested on his account, he exclaimed, "'Sdeath! why did he not keep out of the way, as I did?"

* Theatre, p. 93, 94, and 149. 8vo. edition by Nichols, 1791.

Digitized by Google

Steele was at this period, perhaps, in more distressed circumstances than he had ever yet experienced; he had lost a situation which brought him in a thousand a year, was deeply involved in debt, without credit, and nothing to depend upon but his pen. In fact, he was nearly in the situation which, several years before, he had predicted as the fate of him who should neglect his own affairs to serve his country.

"There was a certain husbandman," says he, "in a certain kingdom, who lived in a certain place, under a certain hill, near a certain bridge. This poor man was a little of a scholar, and given to country learning, such as to astrological predictions of the weather, and the like. One night, in one of his musings about his house, he saw a party of soldiers, belonging to a prince in enmity with his own, coming towards the bridge: he immediately ran and drew up that part which is called the draw-bridge; and calling all his family, and getting his cattle together, he put his plough, behind that his stools, and his chairs behind them, and by this means stopped the march till it was daylight, when all the neighbouring lords and gentlemen saw the enemy as well as he. They crowded on with great gallantry to oppose the foe, and in their zeal and hurry throwing our husbandman over the bridge, and his goods after him, effectually

Digitized by Google

kept out the invaders. This accident was the safety of that kingdom; yet no one ought to be discomfited from the public service from what had happened to this rustic; for though he was neglected at the present, and every man said he was an honest fellow, and that he was no one's enemy but his own in exposing his all, and that nobody said he was every one's friend but his own, the man had ever after the liberty, that he, and no other but he and his family, should beg on that bridge in all times following."*

Notwithstanding the pressure of poverty and its attendant evils, Steele had sufficient spirits and inclination left to induce him to enter with a lively interest into the welfare and concerns of his fellow-citizens; and he might justly exclaim with Horace,

Aliena negotia curo,
Excussus propriis.

———Other men's affairs,
Now banish'd from my own, employ my cares.
DUNCOMBE.

At this era the memorable South-sea scheme agitated the nation almost to madness, and Sir Richard, who early saw the fallacy and iniquity of the whole plan, employed his pen vigorously in opposing it. Besides some papers in the *Thea-*

* Reader, No. 2.—April 24th, 1714.

Digitized by Google

tre on this subject, he wrote a pamphlet called *The Crisis of Property; an Argument, proving that the Annuitants for Ninety-nine Years, as such, are not in the Condition of other Subjects of Great Britain; but, by Compact with the Legislature, are exempt from any new Direction relating to the said Estates.* This was published on February the 1st, 1720, and was followed on the 27th of the same month by *A Nation a Family; being the Sequel of the Crisis of Property; or, a Plan for the Improvement of the South-sea Proposal.* On the present, as on every other occasion, he wanted not opponents; but as the catastrophe of this mischievous business very rapidly approached, and became an object of parliamentary enquiry before the close of the year, he was probably, on that account, prevented the trouble of noticing his antagonists.

Another revolution in the fortune and circumstances of Sir Richard was now on the eve of taking place. His great friend and patron Mr. Walpole, who, on the 10th of April, 1717, had resigned his place of first commissioner of the treasury, (an event which had, without doubt, laid the immediate foundation for all our author's subsequent misfortunes) was, on April the 2d, 1721, appointed chancellor of the exchequer; Mr. Aislabie, his predecessor, having been disgraced as a participator in the frauds and profits of

Digitized by Google

the South-sea bubble. The almost instant consequence of this elevation was Steele's restoration to his office and authority at Drury-lane. Animated by such unexpected good fortune, his dramatic genius, which had slept for many years, revived with additional lustre; and the year following the resumption of his post as patentee, *The Conscious Lovers*, one of the best comedies on the English stage, was presented to an admiring public.

It would now naturally be imagined that Sir Richard, taught by ample experience, would pay some attention to economy. Such however was the power of habit, such his thoughtless profusion, that, though the profits from his play, independent of his majesty's bounty,* were unusually great, and his income from the theatre very handsome, scarcely a twelvemonth had passed over his head, before the exigencies of want were again felt. To relieve these, he sold, in 1723, his share in the play-house, and shortly afterwards commenced a law-suit with the managers, which, after a duration of near three years, was at length determined against him.

"In all the transactions of life," observes Cibber, recounting the proceedings of this law-suit, "there cannot be a more painful circumstance,

* The King, to whom he dedicated it, gave him a purse of 500*l*.

Digitized by Google

than a dispute at law with a man with whom we have long lived in agreeable amity. But when SIR RICHARD, to get himself out of difficulties, was obliged to throw his affairs into the hands of lawyers and trustees, that consideration then could be of no weight: the friend, or the gentleman, had no more to do in the matter. Thus, while SIR RICHARD no longer acted for himself, it may be no wonder if a flaw was found in our conduct for the law to make work with. About two or three years before the law-suit commenced, upon Sir Richard's totally absenting himself from all care and management of the stage, which, by our articles, he was equally and jointly obliged with us to attend, we were reduced to let him know, that we could not go on at that rate; but that if he expected to make the business a sinecure, we had as much reason to expect a consideration for our extraordinary care of it; and that during his absence, we therefore intended to charge ourselves at a salary of 1*l.* 13*s.* 4*d.* every acting day (unless he could show us cause to the contrary) for our management. To which in his composed manner he only answered, that to be sure we knew what was fitter to be done, than he did; that he had always taken a delight in making us easy, and had no reason to doubt of our doing

Digitized by Google

him justice. He never once objected to, or complained of this for near three years together. But though no man alive can write better of economy than he, yet no man is more above the drudgery of practising it. He was often in want of money; and while we were in friendship with him, we assisted his occasions. This compliance had so unfortunate an effect, that it only heightened his importunity of borrowing more. The more we lent, the less he minded us, or shewed any concern for our welfare. Upon this, we stopt our hands at once, and peremptorily refused to advance another shilling, until by the balance of our account it became due to him. This treatment, though we hope it is not in the least unjustifiable, so ruffled his temper, that he was at once as short with us as we had been with him; for from that time he never came near us. Nay, he not only continued to neglect what he ought to have done, but did what he ought not to have done. He made an assignment of his share without our consent, in manifest breach of our agreement. Our interest suffered by his neglect, since his rank and figure in the world were of extraordinary service to us. The cause was heard before *Sir Joseph Jekyll*, Master of the Rolls. The issue was, that SIR RICHARD not having made any objection to our charge for management for three years to-

Digitized by Google

gether, as our proceedings had all been transacted in open day, without any intention of fraud, we were allowed the sums in dispute abovementioned. SIR RICHARD not judging it advisable to apply to the lord chancellor to overturn the award, both parties paid their own costs, and determined that this should be the last law-suit between them." *

Of the employment of Steele during the continuation of his law-suit, little information is now to be obtained. In the year 1723, a few Pasquins (a periodical paper so called) have been ascribed to his pen; and it is very probable that in this interval, between the commencement and termination of his cause with the managers, he began the two unfinished comedies, which, after his decease, were found among his manuscripts. They were entitled *The Gentleman*, and *The School of Action*. The greater part of both was written, and it is much to be lamented, considering his eminent talents in dramatic composition, that health and leisure were not permitted him for their completion.

No friend to humanity can contemplate the situation of Steele during this gloomy period of his life without sympathy and sorrow. His frailties, the origin of all his misfortunes, were not

* Cibber's Apology, 4to edit. 1740. p. 308.

Digitized by Google

the offspring of vice, but merely owing to habitual carelessness, and the want of worldly prudence. Compassionate in his heart, unbounded in his benevolence, no object of distress ever left him with a murmur; and in the hour of prosperity he was ever ready, both with his influence and his property, to promote the views of literature and science, and to assist the efforts of unprotected genius. *

That such a man, a man too who had for a long series of years, by the noblest exertions of his talents in the cause of all that was good and praiseworthy, highly instructed and entertained the public; that such a man should in his old age be exposed to want, and condemned, when the powers of fancy and the energies of intellect were failing, to the drudgery of writing for the daily bread of himself and his children, is one of those too numerous events in the drama of human life, which, in every bosom warmed by sensibility, excites the deepest commiseration, the most poignant grief.

* "There was a great similitude," observes Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, "between the character of Henry Fielding and Sir Richard Steele.—They both agreed in wanting money in spite of all their friends, and would have wanted it, if their hereditary lands had been as extensive as their imagination; yet each of them was so formed for happiness, it is pity he was not immortal."

Montagu's Works, vol. 4. p. 307, edition by Phillips.

Digitized by Google

That he keenly felt the miseries of his dependency, beheld with agony the consequent distresses of his wife and children, and made frequent resolutions of economy for their sakes, are facts evident from various parts of his epistolary correspondence, and under circumstances which, compared with the difficulties that he had now to encounter, were light and trivial. In 1717, when the dismission of his patron Walpole overthrew all his hopes and expectations of political promotion, he thus writes to his lady.

"I am talking to my wife, and therefore I may speak my heart, and the vanity of it. I know, and you are witness, that I have served the royal family with an unreservedness, due only to heaven; and I am now (I thank my brother whigs) not possessed of twenty shillings from the favour of the court. The PLAY-HOUSE it had been barbarity to deny at the players' request; and therefore I do not allow it a favour. But I banish the very memory of these things; nor will I expect any favour, but what I must strike out of myself. By Tuesday's post, I think, I shall be able to guess when I shall leave the town, and turn all my thoughts to finish my comedy. You will find I have got so much constancy and fortitude as to live my own way (within the rules of good-breeding and decency) wherever I am; for I will not sacrifice

Digitized by Google

your husband, and the father of the poor babes, to any one's humour in the world. But to provide for, and do you good, is all my ambition."*

Resolutions of this kind, with whatever sincerity they were made at the moment, were never carried by our author into any practical effect. At the period we have now reached, the commencement of the year 1726, the remorse of Sir Richard was so great on taking a retrospective view of his imprudent conduct, and the difficulties and deprivations, the natural consequences of his extravagance, so oppressive, that his constitution sunk beneath the contest. He was seized with a paralytic stroke,† the result of his extreme inquietude, which rendering him incapable of any further literary effort, he took his last farewell of the capital; and having faithfully surrendered up the remainder of his property to his creditors, who

* Epistolary Correspondence, vol. i. p. 139.

† Nichols says, that he has learnt with certainty, and on the most respectable authority, a well-known fact, that Steele retired to Wales before he had the paralytic stroke that deprived him of his intellectual faculties, and solely on the principle of doing justice to his creditors; at a time too when he had the fairest prospect of satisfying all their claims to the outermost farthing.

Swift, therefore, must have been mistaken when he asserts that Steele,

> From perils of a hundred jails,
> Withdrew to starve and die in Wales.

Digitized by Google

benevolently allowed him a revenue for his support, he retired to Hereford. "In 1725," says Mr. Victor, "Sir Richard Steele left London. He retired to the city of Hereford, and was lodged and boarded there at the house of a mercer, who was his agent, and receiver of the rents of an encumbered estate of six hundred pounds a year, which Sir Richard obtained by his late wife:—at his death it devolved to his two daughters, who were both well married. I was told he retained his cheerful sweetness of temper to the last; and would often be carried out in a summer's evening, where the country lads and lasses were assembled at their rural sports,—and, with his pencil, give an order on his agent, the mercer, for a new gown to the best dancer. In the year 1727, when I was a *levee-hunter*, and making an interest with the first minister, that good old man hearing of it, inclosed me an open letter to Sir Robert Walpole, that, I remember, began thus: *If the recommendation of the most obliged man can be of any service to the bearer*—Sir Robert received it with his usual politeness."*

In this city, however, Sir Richard remained not long; he left it in a year or two for Wales:

> And, fix'd on Cambria's solitary shore,
> Gave to St. David one true Briton more.

* Victor's Original Letters, Dramatic Pieces, and Poems, vol. i. p. 330, 8vo. 1776.

Digitized by Google

In this principality he resided, by the indulgence of the mortgagee, on his seat at Llangunnor, near Caermarthen. Here, though distant from the scene of his former celebrity and connections, though worn down by mental anxiety and bodily disease, he was not totally forgotten by the world. The heavy gloom which enveloped the close of his career was occasionally dispersed by the notice of his contemporaries, by the grateful approbation of the wise and good. The following dedication, prefixed in the form of a letter, from the REV. WILLIAM ASPLIN,* to a Disquisition upon worshipping towards the East, entitled ALKIBLA, must have been read by Sir Richard with the most soothing emotions, and may probably have contributed toward rendering his passage to the grave more tranquil and resigned.

"TO SIR, RICHARD STEELE.

"March 2, 1728.

In the brightest days of *Britain*, when *Bickerstaff* presided in the chair of wit, and o'er this happy land showered *manna* down which suited every taste, I had the honour, though unworthy and unknown, to be accepted as an humble correspondent. And it gives me now a melancholy reflection, when I am once more inclined to visit

* Of St. Alban Hall, Oxford, where he took his degree of M. A. in 1710.

Digitized by Google

the world in print, that the only person, who introduced me to it, is himself retired.—To be an intruder upon solitude, I am conscious, is rudeness; but, as the greatest souls have never been so much adored, as when departed, suffer me, sir, to approach your recess, (which ought to be sacred) with the reverence due to the genius of our isles, and to make this small oblation of gratitude to the immortal *manes* of the SPECTATOR."

After lingering near two years in this secluded situation, the martyr of unavailing regret, Sir Richard descended to the grave on the twenty-first of September, 1729.

His first lady was a native of the island of Barbadoes, and the sister of a rich planter, on whose death Sir Richard came into possession of his plantations and property. On the decease of Mrs. Steele without issue, he married Mary, daughter of Jonathan Scurlock, Esq. of Llangunnor, in Caermarthenshire, a beautiful young lady about the age of eight or nine-and-twenty, and with whom he received an estate of near 400*l.* per annum.

At the time this second connection took place, Steele was himself possessed of property sufficient for all the purposes of rational and elegant enjoyment: and it is, in the highest degree, mortifying to reflect that, from mere inattention to pecuniary

Digitized by Google

calculation, he should so soon suffer the cup of happiness and repose to be dashed for ever from his lips. Immediately previous to his marriage he thus states, to the mother of his intended bride, his circumstances and resources.

" MADAM, September 3, 1707.

" The young lady, your daughter, told me she had a letter from you, wherein you gave her the highest marks of your affection and anxiety for her welfare in relation to me. The main prospect on these occasions is that of fortune; therefore I shall very candidly give you an account of myself as to that particular. My late wife had so extreme a value for me, that she, by fine, conveyed to me her whole estate, situate in Barbadoes, which, with the stock and slaves, (proper securities being given for the payment of the rent) is let for 850*l.* per annum, at half-yearly payments; that is to say, 425*l.* each first of May, and 425*l.* each first of December. This estate came to her encumbered with a debt of 3000*l.* by legacies and debts of her brother, whose executrix she was, as well as heiress. I confess it has not been in my power to lessen the incumbrance, by reason of chargeable sicknesses, and not having at that time any employment of profit. But at present, and ever since May last,

Digitized by Google

I have been appointed by the secretaries of state to write the gazette, with a salary of 300*l.* a year, paying a tax of 45*l.* I am also gentleman-waiter to his royal highness the Prince, with a salary of 100*l.* a year, not subject to taxes.

Thus my whole income is at present, per annum	£.1,250
Deduct the interest of 3,000*l.*...180*l.* Ditto taxes for my employment 45*l.*	225
Remains after these deductions	£.1,025

"This is, madam, the present state of my affairs; and though this income is so large, I have not taken any regard to lay up any thing further than just what pays the interest above mentioned.

"If I may be so happy to obtain your favour, so as we may live together with singleness of mind, I shall readily go into such measures as shall be thought most adviseable for our mutual interest; and, if it is thought fit, will sell what I have in the plantations. Your daughter acquaints me, there is a demand of 1,400*l.* upon your estate, the annual income of which is better than 400*l.* You have now the whole view of both our circumstances before you; and you see there is foundation for our living in an handsome manner, provided we can be of one

Digitized by Google

mind; without which I could not propose to myself any happiness or blessing, were my circumstances ever so plentiful. I am at a present juncture in my affairs, and my friends are in great power; so that it would be highly necessary for us to be in the figure of life which we shall think convenient to appear in, as soon as may be; that I may prosecute my expectations in a busy way while the wind is for me, with just consideration that about a court it will not always blow one way. Your coming to town is mightily to be wished. I promise myself the pleasures of an industrious and virtuous life, in studying to do things agreeable to you. But I will not enlarge into professions. I assure you, I shall always contend with you who shall lay the greater obligations on the other; and I can form to myself no greater satisfaction than having one day your permission to subscribe myself, madam, your most obedient son, and most humble servant.

"RICHARD STEELE.

"Writing is painful to me.

"If you inclose your letters to your daughter, they will come free, 'To Richard Steele, Esq. at the Secretary's Office, Whitehall.'" *

* Vide Steele's Correspondence, vol. I. p. 17.

Digitized by Google

To Miss Scurlock, Steele was very strongly attached, and has expressed his esteem for her in various parts of his numerous works; particularly in a dedication to her, prefixed to the third volume of *The Lady's Library*, a compilation which he published in 1714. In the twelfth number of his *Theatre* also, dated February the 9th, 1720, he thus feelingly alludes to this beloved, though then lost, companion: "the best woman that ever man had, cannot now lament and pine at his neglect of himself." Above all, his epistolary correspondence presents ample proof, if any further were required, of his domestic virtues, and his conjugal affection.

The only fault attributed to Lady Steele appears to have been too great a partiality for money, probably occasioned by daily witnessing the thoughtless extravagance of her husband. Steele, in one of his letters to her, exclaims, "I have no hopes but by *dint of riches* to get the government of your ladyship:"* and in the *Englishman*, when celebrating the greatness and equanimity of a poor man with a *tar neck-cloth*, who, with perfect *sang-froid*, was first informed at a coffee-house of his having gotten a prize of 10,000*l.* in the lottery, and after strictly and coolly examining into the truth of the informa-

* Steele's Correspondence, vol. i. p. 119.

Digitized by Google

tion, turned out of his pocket half-a-crown and sixpence, and presenting the half-crown to the waiter, observed, "It is all I have got now; but I will call another time, and give you more for your good news:" he adds, "I speak it sincerely, I had much rather have his temper than his fortune; for had it happened to me, alas! I should have given it, like a slave as I am, *to a woman who despises me without it.* Hang her, however, I wish I had it for her sake." *

That she was, notwithstanding this charge, a most tender and dutiful wife, Steele himself has frequently acknowledged; and, indeed, the whole tenor of their epistolary correspondence evinces it. To these may be added another proof in the following affectionate lines:

MRS. STEELE TO HER HUSBAND.

Ah! Dick Steele, that I were sure
Your love like mine would still endure;
That time, nor absence, which destroys
The cares of lovers, and their joys,
May never rob me of that part
Which you have given of your heart:
Others unenvy'd may possess
Whatever they think happiness.
Grant this, O God, my great request;
In his dear arms may I for ever rest! †

* Steele's Letters, vol. i. p. 119.—Note.

† Letters, vol. i. p. 272.

Digitized by Google

Lady Steele, after bringing her husband four children, died on the 26th of December, 1718, aged forty years, and was buried in Westminster Abbey. Of the children, two were boys, who perished early in life, the first in his infancy, the second, who had been christened Eugene, after the celebrated Prince of that name, died consumptive about the age of puberty. One of the daughters likewise, Mary, died an infant; and Elizabeth married, in May, 1731, the Honourable John Trevor, at that time one of the Welch Judges, and afterwards Baron Trevor of Bromham, who had issue by her one daughter, named Diana.

Besides these legitimate children, Sir Richard had one natural daughter, whom it was his intention to have married to the celebrated, but unfortunate, Savage.* Of this eccentric character

* "Sir Richard, soon after his marriage with Miss Scurlock, desired, if she was not engaged, she would accompany him on a visit he intended making in the afternoon. The carriage was ordered, and, without acquainting his wife to whom the visit was designed, they drove to a boarding-school in the environs of London, where they alighted, and presently a young lady made her appearance, to whom Steele shewed the greatest fondness, insomuch that his wife asked him, 'if the child was his?' On his acknowledging that she was, 'then,' said the lady, 'I beg she may be mine too.' She was accordingly taken home, and treated as their own; but, by the order of the mistress of the family, she was called *Miss Ousley*. In process

Digitized by Google

he benevolently pitied the misfortunes, and warmly espoused the interests; frequently declaring, that "the inhumanity of his mother had given him a right to find every good man his friend." The compassion of Steele was never a transient emotion, forgotten the moment its object was re-

of time, she became the companion of their eldest daughter, Miss E. Steele, who, piqued at the attention paid by her father and mother to Miss Ousley, could not help shewing it now and then in her behaviour to her companion; which was the reason she afterwards gave for marrying a Mr. Aynston, a worthy respectable man, who lived on a little patrimony at Amely near Hereford, and was concerned in a glove manufactory there. Though this marriage was with the approbation of Sir Richard, Mr. Aynston was not by any means a man whose education and situation in life was likely to be the choice of a young woman bred up as Miss Ousley had been; yet, in point of circumstances, much more so than if she had become the wife of Savage. Whether the reason assigned for marrying Mr. Aynston were real or imaginary, may be doubted; for Miss Steele never spoke of it without seeming to ridicule it, nor mentioned her husband without evident marks of dislike. To her sister she continued every possible token of friendship and tenderness after Sir Richard's death; and Mrs. Aynston constantly spent a few months with her every year. During one of these visits to her in London, she unfortunately died almost suddenly. But her friend's regard ended not here; Mrs. Aynston left an only daughter, whom Lady Trevor had taken under her protection sometime before the mother's death, and who continued the inseparable companion and intimate friend of her benefactress to the last moments of her ladyship's life."*

* Note by Nichols, Steele's Letters, vol. i. p. 252.

Digitized by Google

moved from sight; but was always accompanied, when his power was equal to his wishes, with substantial proofs of its impression on his mind and heart. He allowed Savage an annual stipend; proposed to have fixed him in some respectable station in life, and to have given him a thousand pounds with his daughter. Being never able, however, from his lavish style of living, to raise this intended dowry, the marriage was deferred from time to time; and in the mean while Savage, who was still more thoughtless than his patron, indulged himself in ridiculing the man to whom he was indebted for his support. His presumption soon reached the ears of Sir Richard, who, highly indignant at this instance of apparent ingratitude, withheld all pecuniary assistance, and banished him from his house for ever.

Such was the chequered life of Steele; at one time exulting on the wing of prosperity; at another, depressed by all the evils of the most embittered poverty. He has himself in the Guardian, under the veil of a translation from a Greek poet, allegorized the principal incidents of his life. As the attempt is conducted in a pleasing vein of fiction, and unfolds some minutiæ hitherto untouched, its transcription in this place may be useful and interesting to the reader.

Digitized by Google

"I was born," says he, "at the foot of a certain mountain in Greece called Parnassus, where the country is remarkably delicious. My mother, while she was with child of me, longed for laurel leaves; and as I lay in my cradle, a swarm of bees settled about my mouth, without doing me any injury. These were looked upon as presages of my being a great man; and the early promises I gave of a quick wit, and lively fancy, confirmed the high opinion my friends had conceived of me. It would be an idle tale to relate the trifling adventures of my youth, until I arrived at my twentieth year. It was then that the love I bore to a beautiful young virgin, with whom I had innocently and familiarly conversed from my childhood, became the public talk of our village. I was so taken up with my passion, that I entirely neglected all other affairs: and though the daughter of Machaon the physician, and a rich heiress, the daughter of a famous Grecian orator, were offered me in marriage,* I peremptorily refused both the matches, and rashly vowed to live and die with the lovely Polyhymnia. In vain did my parents remonstrate to me, that the tradition of her being descended from the gods

* From this passage it is probable Steele was, at an early period, advised to pursue either the practice of physic or law.

Digitized by Google

was too poor a portion for one of my narrow fortune; that except her fine green-house and garden, she had not one foot of land; and though she should gain the law-suit about the summit of Parnassus, (which yet had many pretenders to it,) that the air was so bleak there, and the ground so barren, that it would certainly starve the possessor. I fear my obstinacy in this particular broke my mother's heart, who died a short time after, and was soon followed by my father.

"I now found myself at liberty, and notwithstanding the opposition of a great many rivals, I won and enjoyed Polyhymnia. Our amour was known to the whole country, and all who saw, extolled the beauty of my mistress, and pronounced me happy in the possession of so many charms. We lived in great splendour and gaiety, I being persuaded that high living was necessary to keep up my reputation, and the beauty of my mistress; from whom I had daily expectations given me of a post in the government, or some lavish present from the great men of our commonwealth. I was so proud of my partner, that I was perpetually bringing company to see her, and was a little tiresome to my acquaintance, by talking continually of her several beauties. She herself had a most exalted conceit of her

Digitized by Google

charms, and often invited the ladies to ask their opinions of her dress; which if they disapproved in any particular, she called them a pack of envious insipid things, and ridiculed them in all companies. She had a delicate set of teeth, which appeared most to advantage when she was angry; and therefore she was very often in a passion. By this imprudent behaviour, when we had run out of our money, we had no living soul to befriend us; and every body cried out, it was a judgment upon me for being a slave to such a proud minx, such a conceited hussy.

"I loved her passionately, and exclaimed against a blind and injudicious world. Besides, I had several children by her, and was likely still to have more; for I always thought the youngest the most beautiful. I must not forget that a certain great lord offered me a considerable sum in my necessity, to have the reputation of fathering one of them; but I rejected his offer with disdain. In order to support her family and vanities, she carried me to Athens; where she put me upon a hundred pranks to get money. Sometimes she dressed me in an antic robe, and placed a diadem on my head, and made me gather a mob about me by talking in a blustering tone, and unintelligible language. Sometimes she

Digitized by Google

made me foam at the mouth, roll my eyes, invoke the gods, and act a sort of madness which the Athenians call the Pindarism. At another time she put a sheephook into my hand, and drove me round my garret, calling it the plains of Arcadia. When these projects failed, she gave out, with great success, that I was an old astrologer; * after that, a dumb man; † and last of all she made me pass for a lion. ‡

"It may seem strange, that, after so tedious a slavery, I should ever get my freedom. But so it happened, that during the three last transformations, I grew acquainted with the lady Sophia, whose superior charms cooled my passion for Polyhymnia; insomuch that some envious dull fellows gave it out, my mistress had jilted and left me. But the slanders of my enemies were silenced by my public espousal of Sophia; who, with a greatness of soul, void of all jealousy, hath taken Polyhymnia for her woman, and is dressed by her every day." §

A full display of the moral character of Steele will present an useful lesson to every individual, however situated, or however circumstanced.

His constitution was warm, and his temper rather vehement and hasty in embracing whatever

* Isaac Bickerstaff, Esq. † The Spectator.
‡ The Guardian. § Guardian, vol. ii. No. 141.

Digitized by Google

seemed, at the moment expedient, in national and political affairs. His opposition, therefore, was spirited and zealous, and sometimes more bitter and acrimonious than the object seemed to demand. His provocations, however, it must be allowed, were great; for his adversaries were neither reluctant nor sparing in the use of every species of detraction and abuse. If contrasted, therefore, with the writers by whom he was attacked, no unprejudiced person will refuse to Sir Richard the claim of comparative candour, urbanity, and mildness; nor, if his conduct and motives be duly weighed, the still higher praise of steady and genuine patriotism. When once convinced that he was promoting the essential interests of his country and her constitution, no power, however formidable, no promotion, however alluring, could deter or tempt him from the path of rectitude.

In the relations of social and domestic life, few men were more amiable or more interesting. As a companion, he was full of vivacity and wit; of easy yet of eloquent manners; intimately acquainted with the fashionable topics of the day, and ever ready to oblige. These requisites for general society brought with them, as usual, many inconveniencies; and of these the most injurious to his family and character was an attachment

Digitized by Google

to the pleasures of the bottle. Though Steele by this indulgence never became an object of degradation or ridicule, on the contrary his gratifications were seldom unaccompanied by the refinements of genius and of taste; yet his time, ever valuable, was wasted by these convivialities, and his habits of dissipation insensibly strengthened.

The gaieties of mixed society, which have in general, when frequently resorted to, a tendency to weaken the finer feelings of the heart, had happily no influence in diminishing the sensibility of Steele. He was, as a friend, tender, faithful, and assiduous; as a husband and a father, attentive, affectionate, and kind; a citizen equally loyal and constitutional, and, in all his dealings with mankind, open, liberal, and sincere.

To the established religion of his country, to its liturgy and rites, he was a firm and enlightened adherent. Free from bigotry or superstition, the avowed enemy of Popery, and a rational admirer of the Protestant Reformation, his writtings relative to the papal church, by exposing the idolatry and pageantry of its injunctions and ceremonies, were, at the critical period in which they were composed, of essential service to the Protestant cause, and to the House of Hanover, by placing in its proper light the religion of the exiled family, whose restoration to the Throne he

Digitized by Google

had ever justly viewed as pregnant with the most fatal consequences to his country.

In addition to the virtues already enumerated, Sir Richard possessed a benevolence unbounded, and a charity the most diffusive. The wretched, the helpless, and the indigent, were not only relieved by the sudden impulse of compassion, when casually presented to his notice; but were, from principle, diligently sought out, as objects on which to exercise an indispensable duty. Of merit in every department he was a warm encourager; and perhaps no individual ever existed more completely void of envy or of jealousy. With him, superior abilities only excited more cordial attachment or more reverential esteem; and of this his connection with Addison is a striking and convincing proof. Though daily conscious of inferiority, both in intellectual acquirement and prudential wisdom, when compared with his illustrious friend, he yet loved him with a brother's heart, which no difference of opinion, public or private, was ever able to shake.

How greatly then is it to be lamented, that with all these amiable and highly useful qualities, Sir Richard should have been rendered miserable to himself, and injurious to others, by the want of *discretion* and *economy*. His passions were easily excited; and the impression of

Digitized by Google

the moment too often, even on the most important affairs, regulated his future conduct. The general consequence of these hasty and premature decisions was, an undue estimate of the value of the circumstances before him, and a thoughtless preference of present enjoyment to distant, though more substantial, benefits. We have seen him very early in life exhibiting a remarkable instance of this frailty, in entering into the army against the wishes and advice of all his friends, with the certain loss of his succession to an ample estate, and with nothing but poverty as his portion.

If this propensity to act without due consideration, and from the mere impulse of feeling, proved through life so prejudicial to Steele, his love of dissipation, and his total want of pecuniary prudence were still more pernicious, and heaped tenfold misery on his head. Addison, at an early period, endeavoured by *kind severity* to check the extravagance of his friend, and having lent him an hundred guineas insisted upon re-payment at a time when Steele, though under difficulties, was capable however of raising the money. The experiment proving ineffectual, he repeated it several years afterwards on a larger scale. Steele had built and inhabited for some time an elegant house adjoining to the palace at

Digitized by Google

Hampton Court, and which he affectedly called the *Hovel at Hampton Wick*. He had not resided, however, many years in this his favourite villa, when, embarrassed from the usual causes, excessive generosity and vain profusion, he borrowed one thousand pounds of Addison on the credit of the mansion and its furniture, giving bond and judgment for the repayment of the money at the expiration of twelve months. On the forfeiture of the bond, Addison's attorney proceeded to execution: the house and furniture were sold; the surplus Addison remitted to Steele, with a genteel letter, stating the friendly reason of this extraordinary procedure; namely, to awaken him, if possible, from a lethargy that must end in his inevitable ruin. Steele received the letter with his wonted composure and gaiety, and met his friend as usual. This account is part of a letter from Victor to Garrick; from a man of reputed veracity, observes Mr. Nichols, and who professes that he had his relation, first from the celebrated actor Mr. Wilks, and afterwards a full confirmation of it from Steele's own lips, who, it is said, always considered this step as meant by his friend *to do him service*. *

* Vide Victor's Original Letters, vol. i. p. 328, 329. edit. 1776, 8vo. 3 vols. and Note to the Tatler, vol. iv, Dedication.

Digitized by Google

The intention certainly was good, and the plan so far judicious, as it seemed calculated to accelerate the desired reformation. Experience, however, unfortunately proved, that to be of service to Steele in this particular was impossible. In spite of every admonition, and of every embarrassment into which this conduct plunged him, he still persisted in the same ruinous career, in the same wanton profusion and unreflecting gaiety. Were it not that a discrepancy as extraordinary is frequently observed between the character of an author and his compositions, any reader of the Spectator would justly be surprised at the complete opposition, on the subject of economy, between the precepts and the life of Steele. "I am astonished," says this amiable but inconsistent character, "that men can be so insensible of the danger of running into debt. One would think it impossible a man who is given to contract debts should not know, that his creditor has, from that moment in which he transgresses payment, so much as that demand comes to, in his debtor's honour, liberty, and fortune. One would think he did not know that his creditor can say the worst thing imaginable of him, to wit, 'That he is unjust,' without defamation; and can seize his person without being guilty of

Digitized by Google

an assault. Yet such is the loose and abandoned turn of some men's minds, that they can dive under these constant apprehensions, and still go on to increase the cause of them. Can there be a more low and servile condition than to be ashamed or afraid to see any one man breathing? Yet he that is much in debt, is in that condition with relation to twenty different people.—The debtor is the creditor's criminal, and all the officers of power and state, whom we behold make so great a figure, are no other than so many persons in authority to make good his charge against him. Human society depends upon his having the vengeance law allots him; and the debtor owes his liberty to his neighbour, as much as the murderer does his life to his prince."*

Who, after reading this passage, so descriptive of the misery of being in debt, and so pointed in exposing its folly, would imagine that the author, from no motive of dishonesty, but merely from inattention to the state of his finances, was, through every stage of life, a debtor. This was, however, as we have already seen, unfortunately the case; and no prosperity, though great, could, for any length of time, place Sir Richard in a state of affluence. His expences, from want of

* Spectator, No. 231.

Digitized by Google

calculation, were ever greater than his income.* A singular instance of this negligence, as to his pecuniary resources, has been recorded by some of his biographers.

Sir Richard had constructed a very elegant theatre in his house for the recitation of select passages from favourite authors, and wishing to ascertain whether it was as well calculated to gratify the ear as the eye, desired the carpenter, who had completed the work, to ascend a pulpit placed at one end of the building and speak a few sentences. The carpenter obeyed, but when mounted found himself utterly at a loss for the matter of his harangue. Sir Richard begged he would pronounce whatever came first into his head. Thus encouraged, the new-made orator began, and looking steadily at the knight, in a voice like thunder, exclaimed, "Sir Richard Steele, here has I, and these here men, been doing your work for three months, and never seen the colour of your money. When are you to pay us? I cannot pay my journeymen without

* Old Richard Nutt, one of the first printers of the Tatler, used to say that Steele paid fifty pounds per annum to his barber, and that he never rode out on airing, which he did often, but in a black full-bottomed dress periwig, the price of one of which, at that time, nearly amounted to this sum.

Digitized by Google

money, and money I must have." Sir Richard replied, that he was in raptures with the eloquence, but by no means admired the subject.

The anxiety and apprehension attendant on involved circumstances must be hourly intruding to poison the sources of convivial pleasure or domestic comfort; and Sir Richard, though he bore the consequences of his extravagance with more equanimity and good temper than will generally be found in similar situations, was frequently compelled to exercise all his powers of persuasion, and all his fertility of invention, in order to mitigate the severity, or escape the pursuit, of his numerous and importunate creditors.* Of the necessities to which he was sometimes driven to avoid arrest, and of the stratagems to which he had recourse, to disguise his difficulties and elude detection, the following incident, as preserved

* Steele, Savage, and Phillips, it is said, one night after having supped together at a Tavern in Gerrard-street, Soho, sallied out in high spirits. They were met by a tradesman, at the top of Hedge-lane, who, after begging them pardon for addressing them on the subject, told them, that "at the top of the lane he had seen two or three suspicious looking fellows, who appeared to be bailiffs; so that if any of them were apprehensive of danger, he would advise them to take a different route." Not one of them waited to thank the man, but flew off different ways; each conscious, from the embarrassment of his own affairs, that such a circumstance was very likely to happen to himself.

Digitized by Google

by Johnson in his life of Savage, will afford a curious specimen.

"Savage was once desired by Sir Richard," relates the doctor, "with an air of the utmost importance, to come very early to his house the next morning. Mr. Savage came as he had promised, found the chariot at the door, and Sir Richard waiting for him, and ready to go out. What was intended, and whither they were to go, Savage could not conjecture, and was not willing to enquire; but immediately seated himself with Sir Richard. The coachman was ordered to drive, and they hurried with the utmost expedition to Hyde-Park-corner, where they stopped at a petty tavern, and retired to a private room. Sir Richard then informed him, that he intended to publish a pamphlet, and that he had desired him to come thither that he might write for him. They soon sat down to the work. Sir Richard dictated, and Savage wrote, till the dinner that had been ordered was put upon the table. Savage was surprised at the meanness of the entertainment, and after some hesitation ventured to ask for wine, which Sir Richard not without reluctance, ordered to be brought. They then finished their dinner, and proceeded in their pamphlet, which they concluded in the afternoon.

Digitized by Google

"Mr. Savage then imagined his task over, and expected that Sir Richard would call for the reckoning, and return home; but his expectations deceived him, for Sir Richard told him that he was without money, and that the pamphlet must be sold before the dinner could be paid for; and Savage was therefore obliged to go and offer their new production for sale for two guineas, which with some difficulty he obtained. Sir Richard then returned home, having retired that day only to avoid his creditors, and composed the pamphlet only to discharge his reckoning."

We are indebted to the same authority for the relation of another contrivance equally singular but more amusing. "Sir Richard Steele having one day invited to his house a great number of persons of the first quality, they were surprised at the number of liveries which surrounded the table; and after dinner, when wine and mirth had set them free from the observation of rigid ceremony, one of them enquired of Sir Richard, how such an expensive train of domestics could be consistent with his fortune. Sir Richard very frankly confessed, that they were fellows of whom he would very willingly be rid. And being then asked why he did not discharge them, declared that they were bailiffs, who had introduced themselves with an execution, and whom,

Digitized by Google

since he could not send them away, he had thought it convenient to embellish with liveries, that they might do him credit while they stayed.

"His friends were diverted with the expedient, and, by paying the debt, discharged their attendance; having obliged Sir Richard to promise that they should never again find him graced with a retinue of the same kind."*

It does not appear, however, from the subsequent conduct of Sir Richard, that this extorted promise produced any beneficial effect. Though the distresses arising from his dissipation multiplied as life advanced, his gaiety and perfect indifference as to consequences, seldom forsook him; and it was only within a very few years of his decease, when the pressure of age and infirmity began to be felt, that he seriously reflected on, and lamented the result of his imprudence.

It must excite considerable surprise, that a man so gifted as was Sir Richard Steele, possessing many of the most amiable moral virtues, an uncommon portion of intellectual excellence, and an intimate knowledge of the world, should, in direct contradiction to many very admirable lessons of prudential wisdom, the production of his own pen, have plunged himself and his fa-

* Johnson's Lives of the Poets, vol. ii. p. 291, 292.

Digitized by Google

mily into irretrievable distress through mere indiscretion and thoughtless profusion.

Let it be impressed, therefore, on every reader of his life, that the most splendid abilities, together with a pleasing temper, a generous and a feeling heart, are, if unaccompanied by well regulated affections, and a due attention to strict justice and econony, not only incapable of producing happiness, but are even frequently productive of extreme misery.

Of the *literary* character of Sir Richard Steele, I shall at present wave any further consideration; as it will with more propriety find a place at the close of the second part, and after a critical review of his merits as an Essayist.

Digitized by Google

PART II.

ESSAY II.

OBSERVATIONS ON THE STYLE OF STEELE.

AT the period when Steele commenced his labours as a writer of periodical Essays, little attention had been paid to accuracy of style or beauty of composition. To study the structure of a sentence, its harmony, compactness, or strength, and its relative connection as to variety and perspicuity with the surrounding text, were employments, however important, usually neglected, and, if pursued at all, generally deemed pedantic.

Swift, perhaps our earliest prose writer who made correctness and purity his peculiar province, had not, when Steele began his literary career, acquired that influence over the diction of his country in the departments of accuracy and precision which he afterwards obtained. Composition remained, with few exceptions, loose, disjointed, and slovenly; without choice of phrase

Digitized by Google

or vigour of arrangement; and if occasionally exhibiting melody, richness, and force, these are to be attributed not to analysis, scientific acquirement, and design, adapting the powers of a copious language to the nature of the theme, but to the strength of momentary feeling, to the casual felicities of genius.

I am afraid it cannot be affirmed, that our author contributed much to improve or embellish the art of composition. He found it incorrect, and left it so. He is seldom, however, unintelligible; and though he can establish few claims to dignity or elegance, his pages are never deficient in vivacity and ease. Yet of these, I imagine, it must be allowed that his vivacity is more the result of thought than of expression; and his ease the consequence rather of feebleness and relaxation, than of tasteful and assiduous cultivation.

It was the opinion of Mr. Addison, that "there is as much difference between comprehending a thought clothed in Cicero's language, and that of an ordinary writer, as between seeing an object by the light of a taper and the light of the sun."

It had been fortunate for the literary reputation of Steele had he entertained a similar idea, and composed accordingly. Nothing has contributed so much to depreciate him in the esti-

Digitized by Google

nation of the public, as the evident inferiority of his style, when compared with that of his friend and coadjutor. It is given to few to judge of the accuracy of information, or the strength and concatenation of argument; but many, in the present age, are competent to decide on the accuracy and selection of language, on the modulation and cadence of a period; and where one individual may rise offended from a volume by the want of depth in reasoning, or of authenticity in subject, twenty shall be disgusted by negligence and harshness of style, by irregular construction, or vulgar phraseology.

That the reflection, good sense, and knowledge of character, which Steele every where displays in his writings, would have made a greater impression on the mind had they been clothed in diction of a sweeter and more graceful cast, will not be denied by any who have felt the seductive and enchanting powers of harmonious composition. But, unhappily, purity in the selection of words, and a curious felicity in their arrangement, were never, according to his own confession, the ambition or object of our author. The very title of his first series of papers seems to have warped and led astray his judgment; and he idly conceived that, having assumed the appellation of the *Tatler*, his language should re-

Digitized by Google

semble the chit-chat and common conversation of the day. "The nature of my miscellaneous work," says he, "is such, that I shall always take the liberty to tell for new such things (let them have happened never so much before the time of writing) as have escaped public notice, or have been misrepresented to the world; provided that I am still within rules, and trespass not as a tatler any farther than in *incorrectness of style, and writing in an air of common speech.*"* That this was not an hasty decision, the product of the moment, and then laid aside, but acted upon in some degree throughout the whole of his periodical works, and avowed at a period long subsequent to their completion, is evident from the following passage in his dedication of the Drummer to Mr. Congreve: "The elegance, purity, and correctness in his writings (speaking of Addison's) were not so much my purpose," he observes, "as in *any intelligible manner as I could*, to rally all those singularities of human life, through the different professions and characters in it, which obstruct any thing that was truly good and great."

To imagine that essays addressed to the people at large, intended to improve their morals, cor-

* Tatler, No. 5.

Digitized by Google

rect their taste, and ridicule their frailties, should be written in the tone of common conversation, not only without any research after purity and elegance, but even rendered *purposely incorrect* in point of style, must surely be considered as one of the most preposterous conceptions that ever entered the brain of an author. Nothing, without doubt, could be contrived better calculated to depress the powers of a writer, and to render his efforts to instruct and please totally useless and inefficient, than this extraordinary plan, which, had Sir Richard fully acted upon and carried into execution, would long ago have consigned his works to merited oblivion.

It will readily be granted, that elaborate diction and profuse ornament, majesty of cadence and intricacy of collocation, are foreign to the nature of a popular essay. But between this excessive brilliancy and colloquial barbarism the distance is immense. In the interval there may be found a simplicity not careless and languid, but graceful, sweet, and unaffected, admitting of a due degree of embellishment, and yet speaking the very language of nature, and bringing forward without disguise the character and feelings of the author. Of a style thus simple, chaste yet elegant, the acquisition is not of easy purchase, but requiring much taste, much cultiva-

Digitized by Google

tion, and much acquaintance with the best models; it is an acquirement, indeed, which, as Horace remarks,

> ———*sibi quivis*
> *Speret idem; sudet multum, frustraque laboret*
> *Ausus idem.*
>
> ———each may hope the same,
> Daring the same, and toiling to prevail;
> Yet vainly toil, and only dare to fail!
>
> COLMAN.

There is no doubt that Steele, had he chosen to bestow the necessary application, might have attained considerable proficiency in this mode of composition. He knew its value, we find, by terming it pure, correct, and elegant; and he had perpetually before his eyes, in the productions of his accomplished friend, a specimen of its appropriation to every popular and pleasing topic. It is probable, therefore, that the dissipation and hurry in which the greater part of his life was consumed, precluded that attention to the *limæ labor*, to those repeated and finishing touches, without which it is scarcely possible to reach excellence. Wanting time, therefore, and perhaps inclination, for the labours of revision, he endeavoured to render his style familiar, not by a correct and graceful plainness, but by the wretched expedient of systematic negligence.

Digitized by Google

To be *intelligible*, the first virtue of composition, was, however, the laudable aim of Steele, and he soon found, as he advanced, that negligence and incorrectness were of all means the least adapted to his purpose. His style, consequently improves as he proceeds; and though seldom entitled to high commendation, either for its melody, its purity, or strength, it is in the latter volumes of his Tatler, and especially in his Spectators and Guardians, for the most part clear and animated.

To dwell upon the careless composition and grammatical inaccuracies of a writer, who, in almost every other respect, is highly meritorious, appears to be an invidious, and is certainly a very ungrateful task. Were these faults, nevertheless, of a nature subtile and obscure, or covered with any seductive charm, it might be highly useful and necessary to point them out with peculiar precision; but as the errors of Steele are, in general, of a kind too glaring to escape the detection of any person tolerably acquainted with our best and latest masters of style, I shall content myself with barely producing a few of the transgressions most commonly occurring in his works.

The following instances of awkward involu-

Digitized by Google

tion and violated grammar, and of what may, with propriety, be termed colloquial vulgarisms, will indicate with sufficient amplitude the usual blemishes of Sir Richard's style.

1. "Eucrate—enjoyed this part of the royal favour so much without being envied, that it was never enquired into, by whose means what no one else cared for doing, was brought about."

Spectator, No. 84.

2. "Others you shall find so obsequious, and so very courteous, *as there is* no escaping their favours of this kind." Spect. No. 259.

3. "It is not *Me* you are in love with."

Spect. No. 290.

4. "Were any one to see Mariamne dance, let him be *never* so sensual a brute."

Spect. No. 466.

5. "I came to the knowledge of the most epidemic ill of this sort, by *falling into* a coffee-house, where I saw my friend the upholsterer, whose *crack* towards politics I have heretofore mentioned." Tatler, No. 178.

6. "It is certain, there are many thousands like the above-mentioned yeoman and his wife, who are never highly pleased or *distasted* in their whole lives." Tatler, No. 188.

7. "The misapprehensions people themselves

Digitized by Google

have of their own state of mind, *is* laid down with *much discerning* in the following letter."

Spect. No. 79.

8. "This excellent young woman has nothing to *consolate* herself with." Tatler, No. 199.

Errors and defects such as these, which too frequently disfigure some of the most valuable productions of our author's pen, can only be ascribed to habitual carelessness. To a similar cause, likewise, is it owing that numerous passages, which a little attention to arrangement and verbal selection might have raised to energy and elegance, remain flat, nerveless, and involved.

The ensuing lines, which are taken neither from his worst nor happiest effusions, present a fair specimen of the usual style in which Sir Richard chose to clothe his thoughts.

"In conversation," observes he, "the medium is neither to affect silence, *or* eloquence; not to value our approbation, and to endeavour to excel us who are of your company, are equal injuries. The great enemies, therefore, to good company, and those who transgress most against the laws of equality, which is the life of it, are, the clown, the wit, and the pedant. A clown, when he has sense, is conscious of his want of education, and, with an aukward bluntness, hopes to keep himself in

countenance by overthrowing the use of all polite behaviour. He takes advantage of the restraint good-breeding lays upon others not to offend him, to trespass against them, and is under the man's own shelter while he intrudes upon him. The fellows of this class are very frequent in the repetition of the words 'rough and manly.' When these people happen to be by their fortunes of the rank of gentlemen, they defend their other absurdities by an impertinent courage; and, to help out the defect of their behaviour, add their being dangerous to their being disagreeable. This gentleman (though he displeases, professes to do so; and, knowing that, dares still go on to do so) is not so painful a companion, as he who will please you against your will, and resolves to be a wit." *

This passage, which is throughout somewhat feeble and entangled, exhibiting little modulation, and where not a sentence can be termed vigorously or beautifully constructed, a few alterations from the hand of taste would have rendered lucid and harmonious.

Had Steele possessed either the cultivated critical powers or the unwearied assiduity of Addison, who was minute even to excess in polishing and retouching his pieces, this and every

* Tatler, No. 244.

Digitized by Google

other part of his works requiring no particular elevation of Style, would have been neat, correct, and graceful; qualities indispensable to almost every species of composition, and without which the utility of writing cannot be carried to its full extent.

Though on topics involving no particular interest, nor exciting any strong feelings, our author was very apt to be remiss and slovenly in his style; yet when, warmed by the nature of his subject, his sensibility was appealed to, or his passions roused, it will generally be found, on examination, to flow with considerable spirit and perspicuity.

I could, with equal ease and pleasure, produce several passages from the essays of Steele, in confirmation of this remark, and which are alike creditable to his heart and taste. Two, however, after having severely censured his *general* mode of composition, I think myself compelled in justice to quote.

The first contains some natural and touching reflections on the loss of a beloved object by premature death.

" In such a humour as I am now in," exclaims our author, " I can the better indulge myself in the softnesses of humanity, and enjoy that sweet

Digitized by Google

anxiety which arises from the memory of past afflictions.—

"Here, were there words to express such sentiments with proper tenderness, I should record the beauty, innocence, and untimely death, of the first object my eyes ever beheld with love. The beauteous virgin! how ignorantly did she charm, how carelessly excel! Oh death! thou hast right to be bold, to the ambitious, to the high, and to the haughty; but why this cruelty to the humble, to the meek, to the undiscerning, to the thoughtless? Nor age, nor business, nor distress, can erase the dear image from my imagination. In the same week I saw her dressed for a ball, and in a shroud. How ill did the habit of death become the pretty trifler."*

The second contrasts with much eloquence and effect the virtuous and the vicious of the female sex.

"The ill," says he, "are employed in communicating scandal, infamy, and disease, like furies; the good distribute benevolence, friendship, and health, like angels. The ill are damped with pain and anguish at the sight of all that is laudable, lovely, or happy; the virtuous are touched

* Tatler, No. 181.

Digitized by Google

with commiseration towards the guilty, the disagreeable, and the wretched. There are those who betray the innocent of their own sex, and solicit the lewd of ours. There are those who have abandoned the very memory, not only of innocence, but shame. There are those who never forgave, nor could ever bear being forgiven. There are those also who visit the beds of the sick, lull the cares of the sorrowful, and double the joys of the joyful. Such is the destroying fiend, such the guardian angel, woman."*

The energy, perspicuity, and modulation of these extracts sufficiently prove that when animated by his theme Sir Richard had selection of language, and felicity of arrangement, adequate to every demand which periodical composition could bring forward. How highly is it to be regretted then, that in adopting a style for the majority of his essays, he should have suffered his judgment so far to be misled, as avowedly to prefer the tone of common speech, with all its negligences, to a pure and chastely ornamented diction, in which the attainment of excellence was perhaps only wanting to render his otherwise valuable productions perfect and imperishable.

It should be strongly impressed, therefore, on

* Tatler, No. 201.

Digitized by Google

the mind of every person whom a laudable ambition incites to enter the walks of literature, that the acquisition of a correct and beautiful style is only to be obtained as the reward of persevering diligence and study.

The etymology of our words, their general import in the present day, and their various shades of signification, as arising from individual or national association, from the mere perception of our senses, or from the subtleties of abstraction, ought in the first place to be accurately understood. To this verbal knowledge, which calls for no slight research, must be added a perfect facility in arrangement, that is, in the power of marshalling with propriety the *copia verborum* into phrases, periods, and sentences, a task which necessarily implies an intimate acquaintance with the idiom and harmony of our language.

With these philological requisites, which it is possible to acquire merely through the exertion of assiduity with common retentive powers, must be united, to produce an original and luminous style, that comprehension of intellect which is usually denominated genius.

"He that would write a good style," observes a very ingenious author, "must have a clear understanding and a comprehensive mind. He must have that ductility of thought that shall

Digitized by Google

enable him to put himself in the place of his reader, and not suffer him to take it for granted, because he understands himself, that every one who comes to him for information will understand him. He must view his phrases on all sides, and be aware of all the senses of which they are susceptible. He must so choose his words, and so limit his expressions, as to produce an unallayed perspicuity. There is no fault in writing so great as ambiguity and obscurity.

"He must have an ear for the harmony of language. This has been found by experience to be by no means the same thing as a musical ear. The most exquisite musician may want it; and he that has no delight in concords of inarticulate sound, may possess it in a sovereign degree. When he has formed to himself this species of taste, he must employ the sort of music it recommends with a frugal hand. He must not pall his readers with a satiety of sweetness. What is most necessary, is that he should avoid the too frequent recurrence of what is broken, abrupt, and discordant. The true music of a good style, is rather a philosophically just arrangement of ideas, than a laborious cultivation of the arts of sound.

"Lastly, he must have a decisive and ardent thirst after simplicity. This is the first of all

Digitized by Google

beauties. This is the basis and ground-work of every beauty. Even in the most ornamented composition, in the 'torrent, tempest, and whirlwind' of eloquence, there must be 'begotten a temperance that may give it smoothness.' He that is not penetrated with a love of simplicity, may write sounding bombast or gaudy nothings; but can never be truly either pathetic or sublime.

"A good style is essential to our obtaining from others a just consideration of our thoughts. There can be nothing eminently winning and insinuating without it. He that writes a bad style, erects a barrier between himself and his reader, and does not allow his reflections and notions to obtain a fair hearing. A man of taste will often be found, either wholly unable to proceed in reading a work thus disgraced, or proceeding with disgust, and performing his journey through it as a wearisome task. The writer is perpetually diverting our thoughts from his subject, to remark the aukwardness or absurdity of his expressions. He either startles us with his uncouthness, or composes us into hypochondriac listlessness by the inanity of his periods.

"The true effect of a good style is to enable us to apprehend the ideas of our author without adulteration. We go forward along with him, and are conscious of no impediment; we burn with

Digitized by Google

his ardour, and are illuminated with his perspicuity. Our first sensation from his writings, is that of his thoughts, and nothing else. It is only by a reflex act, more or less frequent during the perusal, that we advert to the charms of his composition." *

After the observations that we have now given on the style of Steele, and on the properties essential to excellence in composition, it may be asserted without fear of contradiction, that among the numerous obligations which Sir Richard has conferred on his country, through the medium of his writings, the improvement of its language and composition cannot with propriety be enumerated. He will be found in purity and simplicity inferior to Tillotson; to Temple in elegance and harmony; to Dryden in richness, mellowness, and variety. To the two former, however, he is equal in correctness; to the latter in vivacity; and with all he is nearly on a level as to ease and perspicuity.

Steele's great misfortune has ever been the comparison so perpetually drawn with regard to style between himself and Addison. The proximity of their productions has naturally led to the consideration of their respective merits in point of composition; and though it must be allowed,

* Godwin's Enquirer, p. 479.

Digitized by Google

that from the best manner of Addison Steele stands widely apart, yet are there several papers which, having been written by Sir Richard with more than usual care, and with evident marks of emulation, appear to have imbibed a portion of Addisonian grace. It is, therefore, by no means an easy task, as has been affectedly pretended, to distinguish accurately, and without hesitation, their respective papers, merely from the contrast of style. Addison is not always equal to himself in diction or construction; he is now and then feeble and remiss, and were the initials of designation withdrawn, those most familiar with the differences of style, with the shades of idiom and expression, might sometimes be foiled in the attempt.

We shall conclude this subject with remarking, that Steele is, perhaps, under this head, an exception to a general rule. It is style which usually embalms for posterity the effusions of elegant literature. Such however are the various merits of Steele in every other respect, and such the popularity of his topics, that, notwithstanding his negligent and frequently inelegant diction, he has attained, and still preserves, the rank of a British Classic.

Digitized by Google

PART II.

ESSAY III.

ON THE TASTE AND CRITICAL ABILITIES OF STEELE.

DELICACY and *correctness* of *Taste* are the result of a clear, sound, and highly cultivated understanding, operating on a heart of great sensibility and feeling; and *Criticism* may be termed the application of taste, thus improved, to ascertain the beauties or defects of the various productions of the fine arts.

In what degree Sir Richard Steele was qualified by nature and education to excel in these departments, and what portion of praise is due to him as a critic and a man of taste, must be deduced from the history of his life, and from an accurate inspection of his writings.

We have already seen from his biography that he possessed warm passions, acute feelings, and a very susceptible and tender heart. Without these, the gifts of heaven, there can be no vivid

Digitized by Google

perception, physical or moral, no emotions from sublimity or beauty, no play of the imagination, no sympathetic sense of what is noble, laudable, or virtuous.

To direct into their proper channels the energies of nature, is the object of education; one of whose branches, perhaps not the least difficult of attainment, is the acquisition of a pure and correct taste. Sensibility, though essential to every individual as the foundation of this faculty, is never adequate to the necessary superstructure, without varied assistance, without great and habitual application. Those productions which the general sense of mankind has acknowledged for models of composition, must not only be studied at an early period, but such a relish obtained for their beauties as shall render them favourites and companions through life.

Though Steele was placed in a school of great eminence, and acquired a considerable knowledge of the Latin classics, he appears to have deserted it prematurely for the busy walks of life. Of Grecian literature there are few traces discoverable in his works, nor is it probable that, after entering the army, he found time to extend his acquaintance either with this language or even with the authors of ancient Rome.

His early attachment to the military profession

Digitized by Google

plunged him into scenes of dissipation incompatible with literary pursuits; nor when he relinquished the army was the immediately subsequent part of his life, or indeed the latter stage of it, much better adapted to the cultivation of critical taste. Immersed in politics or pecuniary difficulties, writing for the stage, or as an essayist on subjects which rather called for an intimate acquaintance with mankind, and a just representation of character and manners, than for philological acumen or peculiar elegance, it has unfortunately happened that but little of that pleasing disquisition on topics of taste and criticism, which so gratefully diversify the pages of Addison, is to be found in the papers of Steele.

Having mingled, perhaps, more than any individual of his day, with the various classes of society, possessing a thorough knowledge of human nature, and a quick discernment of its various shades and modifications, it was a much easier task for Sir Richard, hurried as he usually was by politics or pleasure, to sketch with a rapid though masterly hand the striking portraits and peculiar manners that he had actually witnessed, than to enter upon discussions which imply much previous study and research, and that delicacy and discrimination of taste which can only be the effect of voluntary and habitual cultivation. Sir Richard

Digitized by Google

is, in fact, to be valued rather as a moralist, and an acute observer of life, than as a learned man or a critic.

It is by no means, however, to be supposed that his works are entirely void of critical discussion, or that he has not exhibited occasionally marks, if not of a very polished and refined, yet of no common taste, considering the period of their production.

To the Theatre, and to every thing connected with the improvement of the stage, Sir Richard was particularly attentive. He has himself written with great felicity, though not in strict conformity to dramatic rules, several very popular comedies; and what is worthy of notice, has made Terence, the chaste and elegant translator of Menander, in more than one of his dramas, the object of his partial imitation. The fables of *The Conscious Lovers*, his best production, and of his unfinished comedy, *The Gentleman*, are founded on the *Andria* and *Eunuch* of the Roman poet, an author whose unaffected simplicity and purity of style, had they happily made a due impression on the mind of Sir Richard, would have corrected all his faults, and formed to sufficient delicacy his taste. The exquisite choice of words, the amiable and touching simplicity, and the very elegant though apparently artless diction

Digitized by Google

and collocation which characterise Terence, are no where so admirably displayed as in the first scene of his *Andria*; from which, as a specimen beyond all praise, I cannot forbear the pleasure of transcribing a few lines.

——————Funus interim
Procedit; sequimur; ad sepulchrum venimus;
In ignem imposita est; fletur. Interea hæc soror,
Quam dixi, ad flammam accessit imprudentius,
Satis cum periculo. Ibi tum exanimatus Pamphilus,
Bene dissimulatum amorem, et celatum indicat;
Adcurrit, mediam mulierem complectitur;
Mea Glycerium, inquit, quid agis? Cur te is perditum?
Tum illa, ut consuetum facile amorem cerneres,
Rejecit se in eum, flens, quam familiariter!

Meanwhile the funeral proceeds; we follow;
Come to the sepulchre: the body's plac'd
Upon the pile; lamented; whereupon
This sister I was speaking of, all wild,
Ran to the flames with peril of her life.
There! there! the frighted Pamphilus betrays
His well-dissembled and long hidden love;
Runs up and takes her round the waist, and cries,
Oh! my Glycerium! what is it you do?
Why, why endeavour to destroy yourself;
Then she, in such a manner, that you thence
Might easily perceive their long, long love,
Threw herself back into his arms, and wept,
Oh! how familiarly! COLMAN.

Dropping this digression, and returning to our own theatre, it may be observed, that the lucu-

Digitized by Google

brations of Steele were acknowledged by the performers themselves, as having contributed more than any other means toward rendering them better acquainted with the duties and qualifications of their profession. The stage, at the commencement of the eighteenth century, had little of the respectability which it has since attained. Its comedians were, when compared with those who now tread the boards of Drury-lane and Covent-garden, vulgar and illiterate; and the violations of propriety as to dress, decoration, scenery, and costume, were frequently gross in the extreme. Sir Richard commented with great good sense, and often with entire success, on the merits and defects of the principal actors, on their mode of attracting applause, and on their absurd selection of, and ridiculous style of preparing entertainment for the public. He censured also, with due asperity, the false taste of the audience, in encouraging and applauding such puerile and irrational productions. 'There is very little which concerns human life," says he, "or is a picture of nature, that is regarded by the greater part of the company. The understanding is dismissed from our entertainments. Our mirth is the laughter of fools, and our admiration the wonder of ideots; else such improbable, monstrous, and incoherent dreams, could not go

Digitized by Google

off as they do; not only without the utmost scorn and contempt, but even with the loudest applause and approbation." *

To correct this depraved propensity, to inspire a relish for the noblest effusions of dramatic genius, and to bring into contempt and abhorrence the witty, but immoral productions of his contemporaries, were objects which frequently employed our author's pen. One of his means for effecting the amelioration which he had in view reflects much credit on his taste and judgment. At a period when Shakspeare's popularity had greatly declined, when the dramas of Dryden, Shadwell, Tate, and Lee, had, strange as it now appears, a decided preference with the public, Steele ventured strongly and repeatedly to recommend the study and representation of the works of our immortal bard. So early as the eighth number of the Tatler,† reprobating a very immoral play, by Ravenscroft, he remarks, "of all men living I pity players (who must be men of good understanding, to be capable of being such) that they are obliged to repeat and assume proper gestures

* Spectator, No. 22.

† This number is dated April 28, 1709, in which year Rowe's edition of Shakspeare, in 7 vols. 8vo, appeared. The last folio edition was published in 1685; so that twenty-four years had elapsed between the two impressions.

Digitized by Google

for representing things, of which their reason must be ashamed, and which they must disdain their audience for approving. The amendment of these low gratifications is only to be made by people of condition, by encouraging the representation of the noble characters drawn by Shakspeare and others, from whence it is impossible to return, without strong impressions of honour and humanity. On these occasions, distress is laid before us with all its causes and consequences, and our resentment placed according to the merit of the persons afflicted. Were dramas of this nature more acceptable to the taste of the town, men who have genius would bend their studies to excel in them." And again, in a subsequent part of the same volume, alluding to the general mode which the dramatists of the day pursued in writing tragedy, he introduces the following very just and pertinent observations. They "give us," he observes, "rather the sentiments of such who behold tragical events, than of such who bear a part in them themselves. I would advise all who pretend this way, to read Shakspeare with care; and they will soon be deterred from putting forth what is usually called tragedy. The way of common writers in this kind is rather the description than the expression of sorrow. There is no medium

Digitized by Google

in these attempts, and you must go to the very bottom of the heart, or it is all mere language; and the writer of such lines is no more a poet, than a man is a physician for knowing the names of distempers, without the causes of them. Men of sense are professed enemies to all such empty labours: for he who pretends to be sorrowful, and is not, is a wretch yet more contemptible than he who pretends to be merry, and is not." *

This piece of criticism is a strong proof, that Steele was well acquainted with the peculiar merits of Shakspeare, and had studied his pieces, as represented, with discriminative taste. More than any other writer, indeed, ancient or modern, Shakspeare seems to have spoken the very language of the heart, to have revealed the most secret passions and emotions of the soul. Shakspeare, to use the elegant expression of Mrs. Montagu, "seems to have had the art of the Dervise, in the Arabian Tales, who could throw his soul into the body of another man, and be at once possessed of his sentiments, adopt his passions, and rise to all the functions and feelings of his situation." †

* Tatler, No. 47.

† Essay on the Writings and Genius of Shakspeare, p. 35.

Digitized by Google

Another striking excellence in the compositions of the bard of Avon, is the beautiful simplicity with which he usually clothes the energies of passion. In those moments when nature is struggling to express the overwhelming emotions of acute affliction, despair, or conscious guilt, how simply expressive, and how touching are the thoughts and diction of this incomparable master! Steele felt, approved, and endeavoured to inculcate, in opposition to the cold and declamatory style, this unadulterated language of feeling.

"The strings of the heart," says he, "which are to be touched to give us compassion, are not so played on but by the finest hand. We see in tragical representations, it is not the pomp of language, nor the magnificence of dress, in which the passion is wrought, that touches sensible spirits; but something of a plain and simple nature, which breaks in upon our souls, by that sympathy, which is given us for our mutual good-will and service."

He then instances the pathetic scene in Macbeth, where Macduff listens to the dreadful relation of the slaughter of his wife and children, and the conclusion of the dialogue between Brutus and Cassius, in the play of Julius Cæsar. Adverting to the natural exclamations which Mac-

Digitized by Google

duff in his agony of grief pours forth, he remarks:

"Such sudden starts from the thread of the discourse, and a plain sentiment expressed in an artless way, are the irresistible strokes of eloquence and poetry. The same great master, Shakspeare, can afford us instances of all the places where our souls are accessible; and ever commands our tears.—Therefore, the true art seems to be, that when you would have the person you represent pitied, you must shew him at once in the highest grief, and struggling to bear it with decency and patience. In this case, we sigh for him, and give him every groan he suppresses." *

As Shakspeare, at the time when these observations were penned, had been little subjected to the ordeal of criticism, and though admirably eulogised by Dryden, had, to the disgrace of the nation, given way, in a great measure, to inferior writers, I conceive it places the critical discernment of Steele in a strong light, that he should seize every opportunity, during the course of his periodical labours, to point out and recommend to imitation the neglected though transcendant merits of this great poet.

* Tatler, No. 68.

Digitized by Google

It is a curious circumstance, however, that the original text of Shakspeare was, at this period, even by those who most admired the bard, little known or consulted. The plays most frequently performed had been curtailed, altered, and interpolated with the most daring licentiousness; and even Steele, when quoting the passages that we have alluded to from Macbeth and Julius Cæsar, has had recourse, not to the originals, but to some new modelled and very inferior copies. These, as taken from the prompter's book, were probably every where to be met with, whilst the folios and quartos were scarce; and the edition by Rowe, which had just appeared, had not yet obtained a circulation. The expressions adopted by Steele from the spurious copy are so greatly inferior to the genuine reading, that the effect of these inimitable scenes must have been cruelly injured by their introduction. Macduff, according to our author, exclaims, "What, both children! Both! both my children gone!" whilst the Messenger replies, "There is not one left; but both, both are murdered!"

If we compare these lines with the language of Shakspeare, how flat and dilated they appear. As the passage of the poet, from its excellence, will bear repetition, however frequent, and must always delight as a faithful representation of na-

Digitized by Google

ture, I shall not be deemed guilty of digression, if, to spare the labour of reference, I produce it here. Ross, the cousin of Macduff, after some reflections on the dreadful state of Scotland, thus addresses his relation, in the presence of Malcolm.

Ross. Your castle is surpris'd; your wife, and babes,
Savagely slaughter'd: to relate the manner
Were, on the quarry of these murther'd deer,
To add the death of you.
Malcolm. Merciful heaven!—
What, man! ne'er pull your hat upon your brows;
Give sorrow words: the grief, that does not speak,
Whispers the o'er-fraught heart, and bids it break.
Macduff. My children too?
Ross. Wife, children, servants, all
That could be found.
Macduff. And I must be from thence!
My wife kill'd too?
Ross. I have said.
Malc. Be comforted:
Let's make us med'cines of our great revenge,
To cure this deadly grief.
Macd. He has no children.—All my pretty ones?
Did you say, all?—O hell kite!—All
What, all my pretty chickens, and their dam,
At one fell swoop?
Malc. Dispute it like a man.
Macd. I shall do so;
But I must also feel it as a man. *Act* iv. *Scene* 3.

In the interview between Brutus and Cassius, when the former has announced the death of

Portia, the latter, according to the genuine reading, exclaims,

> How scap'd I killing, when I cross'd you so?

which Steele in quoting has thus transform'd,

> How scap'd I killing, when I thus provok'd you?

But what places the neglect of the original text of Shakspeare, at this period, in the most striking point of view, is, that Steele, in N° 231 of his Tatler, has actually given the entire story of Catherine and Petruchio as a fact which had lately occurred in a gentleman's family in Lincolnshire. It must follow, that he either knew not that it formed the fable of a play in Shakspeare, but copied it from some scarce and forgotten pamphlet, or, knowing it to be the property of our bard, was convinced such was the obscurity into which the play had fallen, that he might safely present it to the public as a recent and original event.

Although careless about, and but slightly acquainted with, the authentic text, the taste and judgment of our author were evinced, even in attempting to recall the attention of his readers to the altered dramas of this immortal writer, which, however injured by the curtailments and interpolations of the players, were still far superior to any other productions of the dramatic muse.

Digitized by Google

As another forcible illustration of Sir Richard's critical discernment, it is with feelings of great pleasure that we adduce the mighty name of Milton.

Various powerful causes for many years concurred to shade the lustre of this sublime poet. His political principles, until the period of the revolution, overwhelmed him with disgrace and obloquy; and the Paradise Lost itself, from the lofty nature of its subject, its novel mode of versification, and its abundance of learned allusion, required much time and study for general acceptance. Notwithstanding these obstructions, however, it securely, though for some years very slowly and silently, advanced to fame. Three thousand copies were sold in eleven years from the date of its publication, and from time to time many of its most judicious admirers publicly expressed their opinion of its singular value.

Among those who, at an early period, and before the critique of Addison, and popular decision had fixed his reputation, saw and proclaimed the merits of our epic bard, may be ranked Sir Richard Steele. At the very commencement of his periodical labours, and anterior to his junction with Addison, from whom, notwithstanding, it is probable he may have derived his high opinion of the poem, he has quoted and panegyrised the Paradise Lost, and has taken

Digitized by Google

every opportunity, through the course of his Tatlers, of accumulating his extracts and eulogia. *

Not only has our author applauded the epic excellence of Milton, but he has quoted also with distinguished praise his minor poetry, which, at the beginning of the eighteenth century, although little more than fifty years had elapsed since its publication, was nearly forgotten.

Mr. Warton's memory, therefore, has failed him, when, after noticing the first impression of Milton's juvenile poems, including Comus and Lycidas, in 1645, he observes, "I do not recollect, that for seventy years afterwards they are once mentioned in the whole succession of English literature. Perhaps almost the only instance on record, in that period of time, of their having received any, even a slight mark of attention or notice, is to be found in archbishop Sancroft's papers at Oxford;" and in a succeeding page he is again wrong in asserting, that "one of the earliest encomiums, which this volume of Milton seems to have received, was from the pen of Addison. In a Spectator, written 1711, he mentions Milton's Laughter, in the opening of L'Allegro, as a very poetical figure; and adds,

* For proofs of this assertion, I refer the reader to Numbers 6, 40, 98, 149, 237.

Digitized by Google

citing the lines at large, that Euphrosyne's groupe of Mirth is finely described." * Two years before this citation and criticism had been given by Addison, Steele, in the ninety-eighth Tatler, dated 1709, had quoted, and seems to have perused with enthusiasm, a beautiful passage from the *Comus* of this volume, in praise of virtue, " reflections," says he, " which, as I read them, made me forget my age, and renewed in me the warm desires after virtue, so natural to uncorrupted youth." †

There can be little doubt, that popular as Steele's Tatlers soon became, his quotations from and praises of Milton contributed in no small degree toward preparing the public mind for the more extended and effective criticism of Addison.

Poetry and Painting have with propriety been

* Preface to Milton's Poems by Warton, 2d edition, 1791, pages 5 and 9.

† It is still more extraordinary, that Mr. Warton should, in tracing the progress of these poems, in the public esteem, declare, " nor is there the quantity of an hemistich quoted from any of these poems, in the collections of those who have digested the beauties or phrases of the English poets from 1655 to 1738, inclusively. The first of these is the *English Treasury of Wit and Language*, by John Cotgrave, 1655. The second, the *English Parnassus*, or *A Helpe to English Poesie*, by Josua Poole, M. A. of Clare Hall, 1657." After this positive assertion, it would scarcely be imagined, that the *Parnassus* of Poole abounds with quotations from the Minora of Milton.

Digitized by Google

termed sister-arts. He who is conversant with the one usually discovers taste and judgment in the other. The same sensibility and imagination, the same keen insight into the workings of human passion, the same selection and disposition of the objects of sublimity and beauty, are called for by both. Though using different mechanism, the result and the general accomplishments necessary to success are similar. No poet can infuse life into his productions, without having first clearly embodied, on the mental canvass, his figures and design. They must be as actually present to his conception, in all their forms and colouring, as if materially before him; nor can the painter, however great may be his manual dexterity, ever hope to excel, unless to the practice of the pencil he can add the creative powers, the plastic and pervading fancy, of the poet.

Fame gives her laurel to the favour'd few:
Whose minds, illumin'd with cœlestial fire,
Direct the pencil, or awake the lyre;
Who trace the springs of nature to their source,
And by her guidance, with resistless force,
The tides of terror and of transport roll
Through every channel of the human soul.

HAYLEY.

It is with the critic as with the artists in painting and poetry. He who can with accu-

Digitized by Google

rate discrimination point out the beauties and defects of a Shakspeare and a Milton, will not usually be found wanting when called to ascertain the merits of Michael Angelo or Raphael. Steele, whom we have beheld as the judicious encomiast of our two greatest poets, has, in confirmation of this remark, given us several instances of an equal intimacy with the province and genius of painting.

This enchanting art had, at the period when Sir Richard wrote, made but little progress in this island toward the attainment of excellence. *Kneller* was a mere portrait painter, nor does he seem to have possessed any talents for the higher department of history; and even *Thornhill's* "blaze of allegory" can now be viewed with little pleasure or approbation.

Sir Richard, conscious of the depressed state of the art, endeavoured to introduce a taste for historical composition, and has particularized some subjects as adapted to the pencil. Among these the story of Alexander and Philippus appears to have strongly impressed his imagination, and has drawn from him several observations which indicate no common knowledge of picturesque effect.

Alexander, seized with a fever while pursuing his victorious career in Persia, is anxious, in

Digitized by Google

order to prosecute the war, for immediate relief. Darius had in the mean time offered an immense reward for the assassination of the Grecian chiefs; and whilst affairs were thus circumstanced, Philippus, the favourite physician of Alexander, engaged in three days to prepare a medicine which should operate an expeditious cure. Scarcely had this promise been given, when the prince learnt through the medium of one of his most confidential officers, that Darius had bribed Philippus to poison him. Shocked at the account, which every circumstance seemed to corroborate, yet unwilling to think his physician guilty, he concealed the letter, and exclaimed, "I will perish rather by his guilt than my own diffidence."

At the appointed hour Philippus enters with a potion. One cannot but form to one's self on this occasion," remarks Steele, "the encounter of their eyes, the resolution in those of the patient, and the benevolence in the countenance of the physician. The hero raised himself in his bed, and holding the letter in one hand, and the potion in the other, drank the medicine. It will exercise my friend's pencil and brain to place this action in its proper beauty. A prince observing the features of a suspected traitor, after having drank the poison he offered him, is a circumstance so full of passion, that it will require

Digitized by Google

the highest strength of his imagination to conceive it, much more to express it.—The confidence which Alexander assumes from the air of Philippus's face as he is reading his accusation, and the generous disdain which is to rise in the features of a falsely accused man, are principally to be regarded." *

This scene is certainly a very interesting one, and the directions given for its producing a full effect upon the canvass, appear to me correct and masterly. Could Steele revisit the metropolis of Great Britain he would be astonished and delighted at the encouragement now afforded to the art of painting. The *Shakspeare*, the *Milton*, and the *Historical Galleries*, independent of the Annual Exhibition, display a combination of varied talent and genius that would reflect high lustre on any era, even of Grecian or Italian art.

That Steele perceived the great utility of historical painting, and was desirous of seeing his views realised in this respect by a kind of national gallery, is evident from the very paper we are commenting upon. "I have frequently thought," says he, "that if we had many draughts which were historical of certain passions, and had the true figure of the great men we see transported by them, it would be of the

* Tatler, No. 209.

Digitized by Google

most solid advantage imaginable." He then enumerates several events in the life of Alexander as admirably adapted to the pencil. One of these, where this renowned warrior is with great humanity administering to the wants of a poor soldier benumbed with cold, might with propriety be chosen as a companion to the still more heroic action of our gallant countryman Sir Philip Sydney, at the battle of Zutphen. "After he was wounded, the horse he rode upon," relates Lord Brooke, "being rather furiously choleric than bravely proud, forced him to forsake the field, but not his back, as the noblest and fittest bier to carry a martial commander to the grave. In which sad progress, passing along by the rest of the army, where his uncle the general was, and being thirsty with excess of bleeding, he called for drink, which was presently brought him; but, as he was putting the bottle to his mouth, he saw a poor soldier carried along, who had been wounded at the same time, ghastly casting up his eyes at the bottle, which Sir Philip perceiving, took it from his head before he drank, and delivered it to the poor man, with these words, "Thy necessity is yet greater than mine." *

This affecting scene Mr. Hayley, in language

* Biographia Britannica, vol. vi. p. 3887.

Digitized by Google

equally beautiful and impressive, strongly recommends to the genius of his friend Romney.

Shall Britain, on her canvass, fail to shew
Her wounded Sydney, Bayard's perfect peer,
Sydney, her knight without reproach or fear,
O'er whose pale corse heroic worth should bend,
And mild humanity embalm her friend!
Oh, Romney! in his hour of death we find
A subject worthy of thy feeling mind;
Methinks I see thy rapid hand display
The field of Zutphen, on that fatal day,
When arm'd for freedom, 'gainst the guilt of Spain,
The hero bled upon the Belgic plain;
In that great moment thou hast caught the chief,
When pitying friends supply the wish'd relief,
While sickness, pain, and thirst his pow'r subdue,
I see the draught he pants for in his view:
Near him the soldier that expiring lies,
This precious water views with ghastly eyes,
With eyes that from their sockets seem to burst
With eager, frantic, agonizing thirst:
I see the hero give, oh, generous care!
The cup untasted to this silent pray'r;
I hear him say, with tenderness divine,
"Thy strong necessity surpasses mine." *

From what has now been adduced, I think it will appear, that of poetry and painting, two of the most appropriate objects of critical acumen, Steele possessed a warm admiration, and, for the

* Epistle to an eminent Painter.

Digitized by Google

most part, a just and discriminative taste. That love for simplicity in design and manner, without which neither grandeur nor beauty can exist, our author, likewise, strongly felt, and has repeatedly praised. The oldest writings, and especially the scriptures, which most abound with this engaging quality, he has occasionally brought forward as examples of this excellence; and he has particularly dwelt upon the pathetic history of Joseph, "which," says he, "is related with such majestic simplicity, that all the parts of it strike us with strong touches of nature and compassion; and he must be a stranger to both, who can read it with attention, and not be overwhelmed with the vicissitudes of joy and sorrow." *

Though, from his hurried mode of life and habitual inattention, Sir Richard, as we have already seen, devoted little labour to the accuracy and refinement of his style, he every now and then displays an ease and simplicity which delight: nor was this altogether the effect of a casual felicity of execution; he clearly saw and admired the beauties of a simple style, and has spoken of Tillotson, then the best model of this species of composition, in terms which indicate him to have been a great favourite.† The following passage,

* Tatler, No. 233. † Spectator, No. 103.

Digitized by Google

if more proof be required, will indisputably shew that, however negligent our author might be as to the diction of his own works, he was both a critical and tasteful judge of the writings and style of others.

"All authors," observes he, "are eligible either for their matter or style; if for the first, the elucidation and disposition of it into proper lights ought to employ a judicious reader: if for the last, *he ought to observe how some common words are started into a new signification; how such epithets are beautifully reconciled to things that seemed incompatible; and must often remember the whole structure of a period, because by the least transposition, that assemblage of words which is called a style becomes utterly annihilated.*" *

Enough has probably been now said to enable every reader to appreciate the abilities of Sir Richard Steele in the departments both of taste and criticism. No deficiency of sensibility or acuteness, but an abridged education, a dissipated life, and a consequent want of time for the necessary researches, together with a decided preference of subjects embracing the delineation of character and manners, were the causes which

* Guardian, No. 60.

Digitized by Google

rendered Steele too negligent of topics which in the present day afford so much elegant and useful pleasure. Politics likewise, too often the bane of polite literature, absorbed a great portion of his life; and to the tumults of party were unfortunately added the distresses of poverty: a situation which almost necessarily precluded that indulgence of literary taste and high finishing which, in general, only leisure and competency can bestow.

From the specimens, adduced in this essay, however, it is but strict justice to infer that he possessed a keen relish of the beauties of painting and poetry; that he was acquainted with their principles, and has occasionally pointed out, with the accuracy of a master, their excellencies and defects. He was a lover of simplicity also both in sentiment and design; and though, from circumstances already mentioned, his own style was too frequently left loose and incomplete, we have seen that he was no incompetent judge of the requisites essential to its purity and perfection, when noticing the productions of his contemporaries.

In short, had he received the classical education which Addison enjoyed, and had he been gifted with the self-government, economy, and

Digitized by Google

calm prudence of that great man, there can be no doubt, from what we know of his writings, but that, both as a critic and a man of taste, he would have emulated, and perhaps rivalled, the productions of his friend.*

* It should not be forgotten, that Nos. 28, 51, and 86, of the Guardian, critical papers supposed to have been written by Steele, were most probably the compositions of Tickell and Young.

Digitized by Google

PART II.

ESSAY IV.

ON THE INVENTION, IMAGERY, AND PATHOS OF STEELE.

OF that species of imagination which delights to expatiate in realms of its own creation, to wander beyond the limits of nature, and "give to airy nothing a local habitation and a name," there are few specimens in the periodical compositions of Steele. For the vales of fiction and enchantment he has seldom deserted the sober walks of life; and *his* invention and imagery are rather employed to associate with moral and dramatic effect the features of existing character, than to insinuate precept in the garb of allegory, and the splendid colouring of a vivid fancy.

Though parsimonious in the use of imagery of this kind, however, he has, in one or two instances, given proof of his ability to employ it with elegance and propriety. In an early stage

Digitized by Google

of the Tatler, the agency of a guardian spirit is brought forward under the appellation of Pacolet.* It is to be regretted, that Steele made not more use of this aërial personage, who, from his nature and functions, was admirably calculated as a vehicle for satire and imaginary intelligence. The papers of which he is the supposed communicator display, however, much knowledge of men and manners, together with a considerable portion of well-applied raillery and useful instruction. The detail of the life of this Genius,† who in a human form existed but a month, is a piece of keen ridicule on the then preposterous mode of treating new-born infants; a subject which, from its extreme importance to health and pleasurable existence, well merited the notice and reprobation of our benevolent author.

The vision and the eastern apologue, so frequent in the writings of Addison and succeeding essayists, are scattered with a sparing hand through the pages of Steele. Yet of the first of these he has afforded us a beautiful instance in N° 514 of the Spectator, entitled *The Vision of Parnassus*. The design is well conducted, the images distinct and properly selected, and the scenery is given in a style of appropriate sweet-

* Tatler, Nos. 13 and 15. † Tatler, No. 15.

Digitized by Google

ness and amenity. In the extensive valley introductory to the mountain of Parnassus, and which is happily drawn as the abode of Silence, Solitude, and Contemplation, who are represented seated on a bank of moss with a brook creeping at their feet, the following little description strongly impresses the imagination as indicative of profound retirement: "there was no sound to be heard in the whole place, but *only that of a gentle breeze passing over the leaves of the forest.*" Such a deep silence is often introduced with great effect into our ancient metrical romances; not, however, as occurring in a remote wilderness, but on entering some magnificent and gigantic castle, where, instead of expected mirth and splendour, the astonished adventurer meets with nothing but silence and solitude.

On the summit of Parnassus, our author discovers Apollo seated upon a throne of gold, surrounded by the Muses, and encanopied beneath an aged laurel. He then notices the poets who held their station nearest to the Nine; and after mentioning Homer, Virgil, and Milton, he introduces *Cowley* in such a way, as clearly to shew that, though singularly popular at that period for his pindaric effusions, he thought him better calculated for a less elevated province of the lyre.

Digitized by Google

"I saw Pindar," says he, "walking alone, no one daring to accost him, until Cowley joined himself to him: but, growing weary of one who almost walked him out of breath, he left him for Horace and Anacreon, with whom he seemed infinitely delighted." In imitating a poet of whose genius and composition he had no adequate idea, Cowley might well be weary. His versions of Horace are tolerable, and his Anacreontics beautiful; but it had been fortunate for the reputation of Cowley, if the admonition included in the wretched close of one of his Pindaric odes had occurred in time to preclude his emulation of the Theban bard:

——Stop my Muse—
Hold thy Pindaric Pegasus closely in,
Which does to rage begin—
'Tis an unruly and a hard-mouth'd horse—
'Twill no unskilful touch endure,
But flings writer and reader too that sits not sure.

To allegory, however, it does not appear that Steele had any great attachment; it is indeed, unless under the guidance of no common union of judgment and imagination, usually cold and uninteresting. If Addison has succeeded, it may almost, without exaggeration, be affirmed, that every subsequent writer has failed. Even in poetry, whose constitution best admits of its

Digitized by Google

employment, the frequent introduction of allegoric beings is generally productive of inattention and fatigue. Spenser, whose fertility of fancy has never been surpassed, is now, owing to the allegoric fabric of his Fairy Queen, no longer in the hands of the people. This amiable poet, a favourite notwithstanding with every enthusiastic lover of the higher poetry, has attracted the attention of Steele, who in the fourth volume of his Tatler,* has selected and transferred into prose the beautiful and consistent allegory of the courtship of Sir Scudamore.† He has likewise, as we have already seen, allegorised in the Guardian ‡ the principal events of his own life; but beyond these efforts there is scarcely any thing to be gathered from his writings which can indicate a partiality to this peculiar mode of composition.

Of the oriental tale, apologue, or fable, (which last may be termed a short allegory, and has ever been popular) I much wish that Sir Richard had afforded us more numerous examples. It is a species of fiction well calculated to display a rich imagination, to excite the highest novelty, instruction, and delight. I can only recollect one instance in the course of his ex-

* No. 194. † Fairy Queen, book iv. canto 10.
‡ Vol. ii. No. 141.

Digitized by Google

tensive lucubrations, where a paper has been altogether composed from the treasures of eastern fable. In the Guardian, N° 148, he has given us the pleasing apologue of the *Santon Barsisa*, yet not an imitation, but a mere translation from the Turkish Tales. From its introduction into a work so popular, it has become widely known, and has laid the foundation of fictions still more curious and elaborate.*

If in the effusions of pure imagination Sir Richard seldom indulged, he has amply compensated for the omission by the invention and originality he has exhibited in the conception and conduct of many of the various characters which enliven his productions. As his merit in the delineation of character, however, will come more immediately under our consideration in the succeeding essay, I shall but cursorily mention here, that the Portraits of Bickerstaff and Cynthio in the Tatler, of Sir Roger de Coverley in the Spectator,† and of Nestor Ironside and the

* The outline of the popular romance, *The Monk*, by Mr. Lewis, is taken from this story of the Santon Barsisa. As a master of the terrible and mysterious, Mr. Lewis has shewn considerable powers; and he has woven his materials, in a great measure borrowed from different sources, with much dexterity, into an interesting whole. He has exhibited, however, such a pruriency of imagination as to render his volumes, written as they are for a circulating library, extremely seductive and dangerous.

† Vide Nos. 107. 109. 113. and 118.

Digitized by Google

Lizard family in the Guardian, are drawn and finished in a manner which not only indicates a perfect insight into the passions and feelings of the human frame, but demonstrates likewise the possession of that creative energy which, from the numerous shades and gradations of manner, can select and associate such features as shall designate a character altogether original, though founded on the usual acknowledged motives and actions of mankind; the resemblance, in fact, is true to the species, though not to any peculiar individual. This faculty of forming natural, consistent, yet *original* character, so essential to the dramatic writer whether in poetry or prose, so rarely attainable, and so valuable when attained, Steele most assuredly possessed in a very considerable degree.

In another requisite, almost equally necessary to popular and pleasing composition, the power of exciting the softer emotions of the soul, it cannot be said with propriety that our author was deficient. Did it fall beneath our province, we could with great facility prove, from his compositions for the stage, that, though a professed cultivator of the comic muse, no poet of his age has brought forward scenes of more genuine pathos. All his dramas intermingle the charms of tenderness with the exhilarations of wit and

Digitized by Google

humour; but the *Conscious Lovers* more particularly abounds with incidents exquisitely tender and affecting. His periodical essays, therefore, which are usually written on domestic topics, and addressed to the people at large, cannot be supposed altogether wanting in appeals to the heart.

The pleasures arising from compassion, sympathy, and that tender melancholy so generally the companion of genius, were, notwithstanding his gay and dissipated life, no strangers to the bosom of Steele. He has expressed his feelings of this kind, as might be expected where the impression was sincere and strong, with unusual felicity of style: "That calm and elegant satisfaction," observes he, "which the vulgar call Melancholy, is the true and proper delight of men of knowledge and virtue.—The pleasures of ordinary people are in their passions; but the seat of this delight is in the reason and understanding. Such a frame of mind raises that sweet enthusiasm, which warms the imagination at the sight of every work of nature, and turns all round you into picture and landscape."*

Of the various beautiful addresses to Melancholy, with which the works of our best poets abound, there is no one that appears to me more exquisitely sweet and soothing than a

* Tatler, No. 89.

Digitized by Google

little song from the *Nice Valour, or Passionate Madman*, of Beaumont and Fletcher. As it is short, and peculiarly illustrative of the pleasing passage which we have just taken from Steele, I cannot withhold the gratification of presenting it to my readers:

Hence all you vain delights,
As short as are the nights
Wherein you spend your folly;
There's nought in this life sweet,
If men were wise to see't,
But only melancholy,
O sweetest melancholy!

Welcome folded arms, and fixed eyes,
A sigh that, piercing, mortifies;
A look that's fasten'd to the ground,
A tongue chain'd up without a sound.

Fountain-heads and pathless groves,
Places which pale passion loves;
Moonlight walks, when all the fowls
Are warmly hous'd, save bats and owls;
A midnight bell, a parting groan,
These are the sounds we feed upon;
Then stretch our bones in a still gloomy valley:
Nothing's so dainty sweet as lovely melancholy.*

* Act iii. sc. 1. Milton, in his admirable poem entitled Il Penseroso, has been indebted to these lines, and to some fine stanzas prefixed to Burton's Anatomy of Melancholy; what he has taken, however, he has altered and digested in so masterly a manner, as not only to embue it with his own peculiar style, but to give it an air of originality.

Digitized by Google

To the propensity which Steele occasionally felt toward the indulgence of this tender melancholy, we are indebted for some papers, which include not only incidents of the most interesting nature, but reflections, as drawn from them, inculcating the noblest lessons of benevolence and resignation. "The contemplation of distresses," he justly remarks, "softens the mind of man, and makes the heart better. It extinguishes the seeds of envy and ill-will towards mankind, corrects the pride of prosperity, and beats down all that fierceness and insolence which are apt to get into the minds of the daring and fortunate."

In no part of the Tatler has he given a more striking proof of his power over the gentler feelings, than in N° 55, where, in relating the circumstances attendant on the couching of a young man of twenty years of age, who had been born blind, he has thrown into the narrative so many pathetic minutiæ, that it is impossible to read it without tears. Among those who are represented as surrounding the patient are, his mother, and a young woman to whom he was tenderly attached. Their anxiety and affection, admirably discriminated as arising from different causes, and the sensations and expressions of the youth

Digitized by Google

on his first acquaintance with vision and its objects, are detailed with so much knowledge of human nature as irresistibly to affect the heart.*

A relation similar to this, but better authenticated as a surgical fact, is given in Cheselden's Anatomy; and Mr. Jago, in his elegant poem entitled *Edge Hill*, has woven both narratives into a very striking and attractive episode.

To enumerate every paper or passage in which Steele has endeavoured to excite the emotions of pity and compassion, would be superfluous. One or two more, if selected with judgment, will suffice, to ascertain his powers in this department.†

In N° 82 of the Tatler, he has presented us with a most interesting little narrative, founded probably on real events, and communicated from Cornwall; though the style, manner, and arrangement are, without doubt, the productions

* The rude materials on which this narrative was founded, were probably communicated by the oculist, a Mr. Grant, who appears to have been an ignorant, unprincipled quack, and who, it has since been discovered, imposed an account upon Steele in no one circumstance correct, but merely calculated to blazon forth his own assumed skill and success. Steele converted his false facts into the pleasing description that we have just noticed.

† The story of Mrs. Chichely, Tatler, No. 104, may be mentioned, likewise, as one of Steele's moral and pathetic descriptions.

Digitized by Google

of Steele. They are such, however, as do him the highest honour; and the lines which I have distinguished by Italics are correctly and beautifully descriptive. I shall give the Tale entire; as it will, independent of its sentiment and pathos, afford an excellent example of our author's proficiency in the difficult art of communicating these short series of incidents with ease and graceful effect.

"A young gentleman and lady, of ancient and honourable houses in Cornwall, had from their childhood entertained for each other a generous and noble passion, which had been long opposed by their friends, by reason of the inequality of their fortunes; but their constancy to each other, and obedience to those on whom they depended, wrought so much upon their relations, that these celebrated lovers were at length joined in marriage. Soon after their nuptials, the bridegroom was obliged to go into a foreign country, to take care of a considerable fortune, which was left him by a relation, and came very opportunely to improve their moderate circumstances. They received the congratulations of all the country on this occasion; and I remember it was a common sentence in every one's mouth, 'You see how faithful love is rewarded.

Digitized by Google

"He took this agreeable voyage, and sent home, every post, fresh accounts of his success in his affairs abroad; but at last, though he designed to return with the next ship, he lamented, in his letters, that business would detain him some time longer from home, because he would give himself the pleasure of an unexpected arrival.

"The young lady, after the heat of the day, walked every evening on the sea-shore, near which she lived, with a familiar friend, her husband's kinswoman, and diverted herself with what objects they met there, or upon discourses of the future methods of life, in the happy change of their circumstances. *They stood one evening on the shore together in a perfect tranquillity, observing the setting of the sun, the calm face of the deep, and the silent heaving of the waves, which gently rolled towards them, and broke at their feet;* when, at a distance, her kinswoman saw something float on the waters, which she fancied was a chest, and with a smile told her, she saw it first, and if it came ashore full of jewels, she had a right to it. They both fixed their eyes upon it, and entertained themselves with the subject of the wreck, the cousin still asserting her right, but promising, if it was a prize, to give her a very rich coral for the child of which she was then big,

Digitized by Google

provided she might be god-mother. Their mirth soon abated when they observed, upon the nearer approach, that it was a human body. The young lady, who had a heart naturally filled with pity and compassion, made many melancholy reflections on the occasion. 'Who knows,' said she, 'but this man may be the only hope and heir of a wealthy house; the darling of indulgent parents, who are now in impertinent mirth, and pleasing themselves with the thoughts of offering him a bride they have got ready for him; Or may he not be the master of a family that wholly depended upon his life? There may, for aught we know, be half a dozen fatherless children, and a tender wife, now exposed to poverty by his death. What pleasure might he have promised himself in the different welcome he was to have from her and them! But let us go away; it is a dreadful sight! The best office we can do, is to take care that the poor man, whoever he is, may be decently buried.' She turned away, when a wave threw the carcase on the shore. The kinswoman immediately shrieked out, 'Oh, my cousin!' and fell upon the ground. The unhappy wife went to help her friend, when she saw her own husband at her feet, and dropped in a swoon upon the body. An old woman, who had been the gentleman's nurse, came out about

Digitized by Google

this time to call the ladies in to supper, and found her child, as she always called him, dead on the shore, her mistress and kinswoman both lying dead by him. Her loud lamentations, and calling her young master to life, soon awaked the friend from her trance; but the wife was gone for ever."

This melancholy catastrophe is one of those inscrutable events, in the order of providence, which, more than any other consideration, should teach every individual to look forward to a future state, where alone permanent happiness may be found. Man passes here but a small portion of his existence; and the days of his pilgrimage on earth, however great may have been his virtue and his faith, too frequently close in disappointment and distress. In another and a better world the justice and the goodness of the deity will, no doubt, fully unveil themselves; and the lot of those who, though virtuous, have struggled with calamity, exceed our utmost expectations. It would, in the mean time, be fortunate for mankind, if, instead of seeking after happiness, they would confine their researches to peace and content, the never-failing reward of a conscious sense of having done our duty. There is probably no man who, having passed through all the stages of life, can close his career, without a full con-

Digitized by Google

viction that happiness in this life is unattainable. The discovery, however unpleasant at first, cannot, I believe, occur too soon; and fortunate is he who midway on his journey can exclaim in the language of our lamented Cowper,

No longer I follow a sound;
No longer a dream I pursue:
O happiness, not to be found,
Unattainable treasure, adieu!

I have sought thee in splendour and dress,
In the regions of pleasure and taste:
I have sought thee, and seem'd to possess,
But have prov'd thee a vision at last.

An humble ambition and hope,
The voice of true wisdom inspires;
'Tis sufficient, if peace be the scope
And the summit of all our desires.

Peace may be the lot of the mind
That seeks it in meekness and love;
But rapture and bliss are confin'd
To the glorified spirits above.*

Though happiness be in this world beyond the reach of man, adversity is ever alleviated by confidence in the protecting arm of an all-powerful and beneficent creator. From no calamity, however dreadful, however apparently irremediable, should we, through his assistance, despair of being withdrawn. The finest illustration of this

* Hayley's Life of Cowper, vol. i, p. 124.

Digitized by Google

truth to be met with in the compass of our literature, may, I think, be ascribed to Steele. It is introduced into a paper usually allotted to Addison; but as the circumstances can only apply to Steele, and include domestic anecdotes of himself and his first wife no where else to be found, I have little hesitation in considering it as a communication from our author to his friend.

"I was once myself," says he "in agonies of grief that are unutterable, and in so great a distraction of mind, that I thought myself even out of the possibility of receiving comfort. The occasion was as follows. *When I was a youth in a part of the army which was then quartered at Dover, I fell in love with an agreeable young woman of a good family in those parts, and had the satisfaction of seeing my addresses kindly received,* which occasioned the perplexity I am going to relate.*

"We were in a calm evening diverting ourselves upon the top of the cliff with the prospect of the sea, and trifling away the time in such little fondnesses as are most ridiculous to people in business, and most agreeable to those in love.

"In the midst of these our innocent endearments, she snatched a paper of verses out of my

* This is all the information on record, remarks Mr. Nichols, concerning Steele's first wife, by whom he got a plantation in Barbadoes. She died, it seems, a few months after their marriage. His second wife, Mrs. Mary Scurlock, attended the funeral of his first.

Digitized by Google

hand, and ran away with them. I was following her; when on a sudden the ground, though at a considerable distance from the verge of the precipice, sunk under her, and threw her down from so prodigious an height, upon such a range of rocks, as would have dashed her into ten thousand pieces, had her body been made of adamant. It is much easier for my reader to imagine my state of mind upon such an occasion, than for me to express it. I said to myself, it is not in the power of heaven to relieve me! when I awaked, equally transported and astonished, to see myself drawn out of an affliction which, the very moment before, appeared to me altogether inextricable.

"The impressions of grief and horror were so lively on this occasion, that while they lasted they made me more miserable *than I was at the real death of this beloved person, which happened a few months after, at a time when the match between us was concluded;* in as much as the imaginary death was untimely, and I myself in a sort an accessary; whereas her real decease had at least these alleviations, of being natural and inevitable."*

* Tatler, vol. iii. No. 117. The lines in Italics are to me a convincing proof that this dream was communicated by Steele; though probably, from some motive now unknown, he might wish Addison to be the ostensible father of it.

Of this exquisitely instructive dream Dr. Beattie has thus exprest his opinion: "One of the finest moral tales I ever read is an account in the Tatler, which, though it has every appearance of a real dream, comprehends a moral so sublime and so interesting, that I question whether any man who attends to it can ever forget it; and if he remembers, whether he can ever cease to be the better for it." *

The subject we are upon brings to my recollection the relation of a disaster more awfully wild and impressive than I ever remember to have read or heard of before; it excites at once the strongest emotions of pity and of terror. The account is given by Dr. Currie, of Liverpool, in a letter to the very ingenious editor of the *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*.

"I once in my early days," says the biographer of Burns, "heard (for it was night and I could not see) a traveller drowning; not in the Annan itself, but in the Frith of Solway, close by the mouth of that river. The influx of the tide had unhorsed him in the night, as he was passing the sands from Cumberland. The west wind blew a tempest, and, according to the common expression, brought in the water *three foot abreast*. The traveller got upon a standing net a little way

* Dissertations, Moral and Critical, 4to, 1783.

Digitized by Google

from the shore. There he lashed himself to the post, shouting for half an hour for assistance—till the tide rose over his head! In the darkness of night, and amid the pauses of the hurricane, his voice, heard at intervals, was exquisitely mournful. No one could go to his assistance—no one knew where he was—the sound seemed to proceed from the spirit of the waters. But morning rose—the tide had ebbed—and the poor traveller was found lashed to the pole of the net, and bleaching in the wind."*

Though the specimens which we have given of Steele's ability in exciting the emotions of sympathy and compassion, are entitled to considerable praise, it cannot be said that he has made so much use of this talent in his periodical compositions as might have been expected from the tenor of his dramatic works, where his comedy assumes almost a tragic air from the too frequent introduction of tender incident. To Sir Richard therefore, as an essayist, the term *pathetic*, as a *characteristic* epithet, cannot with critical propriety be applied; that is, the pathetic does not form a predominant feature in his composition, which, as we shall find in the succeeding Essay,

* Scott's Minstrelsy, vol. ii. p. 139. The Annan, and the Frith of Solway, into which it falls, are the frequent scenes of tragical accidents. *Editor.*

Digitized by Google

claims another appellation as descriptive of its general and prevailing merit.

I am far from wishing or supposing that a pathetic writer should be uniformly so, which would in a great measure defeat the end he holds in view; but merely that he should delight in the frequent recurrence of imagery and sentiment of this nature, which was by no means the case with Steele. Were I called upon to mention those writers in prose whom I think entitled to the term, I should adduce the names of Sterne and Mackenzie, authors who, though intermingling satire and burlesque humour, never fail returning to events and scenery which melt the heart, and bathe the eye in tears.

That our author possessed the head and the feelings requisite to pathetic composition we have fully shewn, by bringing forward specimens as proofs of his proficiency in that line. That he was very sparing in his introduction of these specimens may indeed be regretted, though by no means attributable to him as a fault. His inclination, in fact, usually led his abilities into another channel, where we shall find him, if not unrivalled, at least attaining to undoubted excellence.

Digitized by Google

PART II.

ESSAY V.

ON STEELE'S HUMOUR AND DELINEATION OF CHARACTER.

FOR the perfect delineation of character many qualifications are demanded, which are seldom found attached to literary men. The most acute reasoning, or the most brilliant imagination, if confined to the closet, may indeed produce a beautiful creation of mere fancy, or a profound and abstract disquisition; but will in vain attempt to acquire that knowledge of the human heart from books which the keen observer so readily obtains by mingling with the various classes of mankind.

Few men have enjoyed a greater familiarity with the different ranks of society, as constituted in this country, than Steele. He was early initiated into the army, and in a station at first so subordinate, that his intimacy with the manners of the private soldiery was, previous to his

Digitized by Google

promotion, complete. As an officer he was, from his spirit, conviviality, and wit, not only the delight of his own corps, but his society was courted with eagerness by some of the first families in the metropolis. Wherever he was stationed, his profession was of course an introduction; and his ease, urbanity, and elegance, soon enlarged the circle of his acquaintance to any extent which he might desire.

In the year 1702, whilst yet in the army, he commenced a votary of the Comic Muse, a province in poetry essentially connected with a display of character and manners. To attain excellence as a disciple of Thalia, Steele was admirably qualified; for, though in the highest walks of life he made a distinguished figure, and was, to use the language of Johnson, "the most agreeable rake that ever trod the rounds of indulgence," * he delighted in contemplating the humour and unrestrained manners of low life. This propensity, which he indulged sometimes in a very whimsical mode, † offered him a

* This line, so descriptive of our author, is taken from the 4th volume, page 116, of what has been improperly termed Cibber's Lives of the Poets. They were, in fact, principally written by Robert Shiels, a Scotchman, and the amanuensis of Dr. Johnson, who, as this and many other passages prove, occasionally assisted his friend.

† See an incident in his life during his residence in Edinburgh, p. 130, of this volume.

Digitized by Google

fine field, however, for the exertion of his discriminative powers. In the inferior stations of life, where the polish of artificial habits has not operated to induce an uniform surface, character, in this country of unequalled freedom, starts boldly forward, and with endless diversity, and furnishes abundant opportunity to the lover of unsophisticated nature for supplying his portfolio with sketches, whose strength, originality, and raciness shall at any time, if properly employed, command attention and applause.

With a copious collection of these sketches Steele sat down to the composition of his periodical papers, which abound more with incident and character than those of any contemporary or succeeding essayist. The multiplicity of his portraits is indeed astonishing; and his invention, spirit, and facility in executing, without copying himself or others, such numerous pieces, I deem the peculiar merit, the characteristic feature of his writings. In every other requisite he has been rivalled, and in many excelled; in this he appears to me to stand single and unmatched. Addison, it will be admitted, has more highly finished a few favourite pictures; his humour is more pure and delicate, and his taste and literature superior; but he has not exhibited the same fertility of delineation, the

Digitized by Google

same extensive variety of human character. It must be recollected, that allegory, fable, and criticism, occupy a considerable portion of the papers of Addison, and that some of the most faithful and humorous representations of nature in the Tatler, namely, the courts of Judicature and Honour, are joint productions. I am far, however, from entertaining any idea of competition, as to general excellence between these literary friends; I would only contend, that in the practice of imparting a dramatic air to his essays, by the frequent introduction of spirited sketches of character and manners, Steele has proceeded farther than any other author, and that his success in this department forms the chief merit of his compositions.

These drawings from the life, the result of his associations, habits, and pursuits, are so numerous, that to notice them in succession would fill a volume; I shall, therefore, only point out a few which have more particularly struck me for their fidelity and effect.

The character of Bickerstaff in the Tatler, the invention of Steele, and principally supported by him, which runs through the series of papers and binds them as it were into a whole, is managed with great address and considerable humour. His astronomical and astrological ac-

Digitized by Google

quirements offered scope for much pleasant raillery; and his will, his genealogy, and his account of his ancestors, are enlivened by genuine burlesque and satire.* The description of his sister's marriage likewise, and the disposal of his three nephews, are natural representations, from which both entertainment and instruction may be obtained.† The sister of Isaac and her husband Tranquillus are drawn at considerable length, are well conceived and sustained, and are the vehicles of many admirable lessons on domestic happiness, and the relative duties of husband and wife.‡

Sir Richard, who was a most pleasing companion, and whose powers of conversation were, from the testimony of those who best knew him, truly fascinating, has, in his twenty-first Tatler, given us some excellent observations on the essentials of companionability and mutual converse, and, as usual, under the attractive form of character. *Sophronius*, the medium through which these remarks are communicated, may be considered as one of many pictures which Steele has

* Tatlers, No. 7. 11. 75. The genealogy, however, there is reason to think, is the production of Mr. Twisden.

† Tatler, Nos. 79. 30.

‡ Tatler, vol. ii. p. 214. and Nos. 85 and 104.—Addison has an excellent paper in the Tatler descriptive of Bickerstaff's Journey to the Land's End.

Digitized by Google

taken of himself. "One, and by much the ablest of the many continuators of the Tatler," observes Mr. Nichols, "speaking of this fine character of Sophronius, says, 'One would think that Steele sat here to his own picture, or at least that he complimented another with his own features.'* A character thus illustrative of an accomplishment in which our author was pre-eminently gifted, and presenting at the same time a proof of his skill with regard to the subject of this essay, I shall, without hesitation, introduce at length.

"The most necessary talent in a man of conversation," he remarks, which is what we ordinarily intend by a fine gentleman, is a good judgment. He that has this in perfection, is master of his companion, without letting him see it, and has the same advantage over men of any other qualifications whatsoever, as one that can see would have over a blind man of ten times his strength.

"This is what makes *Sophronius* the darling of all who converse with him, and the most powerful with his acquaintance of any man in town. By the light of this faculty he acts with great ease and freedom among the men of pleasure, and acquits himself with skill and dispatch among the men of business. All which he

* Tatler, Nichols' edition, vol i. p. 184.

Digitized by Google

performs with such success, that, with as much discretion in life as any man ever had, he neither is, nor appears, cunning. But as he does a good office, if ever he does it, with readiness and alacrity; so he denies what he does not care to engage in, in a manner that convinces you that you ought not to have asked it. His judgment is so good and unerring, and accompanied with so cheerful a spirit, that his conversation is a continual feast, at which he helps some, and is helped by others, in such a manner, that the equality of society is perfectly kept up, and every man obliges as much as he is obliged: for it is the greatest and justest skill in a man of superior understanding, to know how to be on a level with his companions. This sweet disposition runs through all the actions of *Sophronius*, and makes his company desired by women, without being envied by men. Sophronius would be as just as he is, if there were no law; and would be as discreet as he is, if there were no such thing as calumny."

Of numerous other delineations with which the pen of Steele has adorned the Tatler, we may mention the fine contrasts between the portraits of *Paulo* and *Avaro*, two eminent merchants; the one generous and noble, the other

Digitized by Google

crafty and avaricious.* In the persons of *Osmyn* and *Elmira*,† he has given a highly finished description of that disguised hatred, that polite indifference, which too frequently renders the conjugal state, more especially in the elevated ranks of life, one continued scene of hypocrisy and disgust. Their mutual agreement to retire to an estate in the Hundreds of Essex, in order that some kind damp might acellerate a separation, is a curious expedient, but much too dilatory for the present day, when a divorce on the evidence of *crim. con.* is as soon arranged and carried into execution as almost any other domestic event. *Duumvir*, the husband and keeper, is another character touched with much spirit and fidelity, and but too common, I apprehend, in what is falsely termed polished society; a man who dislikes his *wife*, merely because she holds that title, and adores another woman, her inferior in every respect, merely because she is his *mistress*.‡ It would seem that gallantry in the days of Steele, if it cannot enter into competition with that of our illuminated age, had at least attained a considerable portion of perfection, as it is mentioned as a mark of abstinence in Duumvir, and a symptom of reformation, that "Laura his

* No. 25. † No. 53. ‡ No. 54.

Digitized by Google

wife, and Phillis his mistress, are all with whom he has had, for some months, the least amorous commerce."

The description of an *easy friend*, one who, possessing no brilliant parts, is, to a certain degree, above great imperfections, and gifted with a most accommodating temper, exhibits an intimate knowledge of the world. "Such a one," observes Steele, "never contradicts you; but gains upon you, not by a fulsome way of commending you in broad terms, but liking whatever you propose to utter; at the same time is ready to beg your pardon, and gainsay you, if you chance to speak ill of yourself.—I have one," he continues, "who smokes with me often, but his parts are so low, that all the incense he does me is to fill his pipe with me, and to be out at just as many whiffs as I take. This is all the praise or assent that he is capable of; yet there are more hours when I would rather be in his company, than in that of the brightest man I know."*

The foibles, the vanities, the virtues, and the vices of the female sex, have furnished Sir Richard with an inexhaustible mine of observation and description. He has studied the female character in all its mutations, as influenced by

* Tatler, No. 208.

Digitized by Google

passion, fashion, or caprice; and there is scarcely a deviation from propriety or decorum as they existed in his days, but what has been noticed and corrected in some parts of his works. Swift complains of his minute attention to the fair, to their dress, their manners, and diversions; and seems to think that the authors of the Tatler and Spectator had rendered their productions frivolous, by dedicating so much of their time and paper to these subjects. He who shall consider, however, the vast influence of the female character on society as now established in Europe; that necessarily the virtues and the frailties of women must immediately affect the whole species, and that man, moulded beneath their direction, indebted to them for his earliest and most vivid impressions, and for that polish and civilization which adorn and distinguish the modern world, must become virtuous or vicious, brutalized or humane, according to the exaltation or depression, the dignity and purity of female manners;—he who shall consider these consequences must allow, that whatever contributes to render the sex more amiable and deserving, better mothers, wives, and sisters, must essentially promote the comforts and the interests of man. That this was the aim, and the result too, of the numerous animadversions on the fair

Digitized by Google

sex which we meet with in the essays of Steele and Addison, will be confessed by every one who has read them with attention, and traced the amelioration of society through the periods immediately subsequent to their publication.

Steele, on a subject so productive of variety and the lighter graces, has, where the topics have been not more important than dress, coquetry, or fashion, drawn with a delicate and sportive pencil the ever-shifting progeny of caprice and whim; and where more serious defalcations meet his view, his manner, changing with the theme, assumes a graver and a deeper tone. In fact, almost every shade of female character may be traced in the portraits of Steele.*

The *dramatis personæ* in the Spectator's ever-memorable club, it should not be forgotten, are the productions of Sir Richard's fertile genius; and that, consequently, the invention, the outlines, and the rough sketch of that inimitable character, *Sir Roger de Coverley*, must be ascribed not to Addison, but to our author. For the filling up this outline, however, with such infinite humour and discrimination we are prin-

* The characters of Lætitia and Daphne, No. 33 of the Spectator; of Delamira and Cleomira, Tatler, Vol. ii. No. 52 and 61, may be pointed out, among multitudes equally excellent, as illustrative of these observations.

Digitized by Google

cipally indebted to Addison; and therefore, not without some propriety, has the character been said to belong more peculiarly to that writer. Yet the few papers which Sir Richard has contributed towards the completion of his first draught, the obnoxious one, N° 410, being now with great probability ascribed to Mr. T. Tickell, prove that he fully entered into the Addisonian conception of the character. The conduct of Sir Roger toward his servants, their fidelity, assiduity, and affection, as recorded by Steele in N° 107 of the Spectator, place the benevolence and generosity of the worthy knight in a very amiable point of view. The exhibition of his gallery, the description of his ancestors according to the arrangement of their pictures, with his brief chronicle of their deeds, form a well sustained scene of humour, and highly consistent with the delineation of Addison. The honest pride of Sir Roger, founded on the antiquity and exploits of his family, his reluctance to acknowledge affinity to the citizen of his name, though he had conferred a fortune on the house, his eccentric praise of Sir Humphrey de Coverley, and the chivalric enterprize of his great great grandfather, are traits truly characteristic and diverting.* Not less so is the relation of his

* Spectator, No. 109.

Digitized by Google

love for and courtship of the widow, who having honourably distinguished him as the tamest and most humane of all the brutes in the country, he immediately on this encouragement obtained new liveries, new paired his coach-horses, sent them to town to be bitted, to be taught to throw their legs well, and to move all together; and, crossing the country with this equipage, requested an interview with the object of his passion, at which having sate half an honr without speaking a word, he returned disconsolate, though ravished by her wit and beauty.*

Of the other members of the club it may be observed, that while the *Templar*, *Sir Andrew Freeport*, and *Captain Sentry*, appear by a kind of convention to have been allotted to Steele, *Sir Roger de Coverley*, the *Spectator*, and *Will Honeycomb* fall more immediately to the share of Addison. The *Clergyman* is rarely introduced, nor does he seem to have been appropriated to any particular individual.

It has been supposed, though upon no firm foundation, that the personages here enumerated were intended as copies of existing characters; that *Sir Roger* was drawn for *Sir John Packington*, of Worcestershire, a Tory not deficient in

* Spect. No. 113.

Digitized by Google

good sense, but abounding in whimsical peculiarities; that in the person of *Capt. Sentry*, Col. Kempenfelt, the father of the late unfortunate Admiral Kempenfelt, who was sunk in the Royal George, is alluded to; that *Will Honeycomb* is a counterpart of a *Col. Cleland*, and that *Sir Andrew Freeport* was the representative of Mr. H. Martin, one of the authors of a work entitled, *The British Merchant*. These are, however, mere conjectures, and therefore claim but little credit. Mr. Tickell, who, from his intimacy with Addison, would most probably have been entrusted with an explanation had there been any to impart, considers the club as a mere fiction, and the characters drawn by Steele in the second number as "so many pictures for ornament and explication of the whole."

It is of more importance to remark, that the characters apportioned to Steele have suffered nothing by their allotment. They are uniformly and correctly maintained, and contribute largely to dramatise and diversify the series of papers with which they are associated.

In the Guardian, as in the Spectator, our author has, in the commencing numbers, though at greater length, inserted striking portraits of the characters that form the plan and outline of the work. *Nestor Ironside*, the Guardian of the

Digitized by Google

Lizard family, is amply and judiciously described in N° 2, and appears vested with powers which completely justify the introduction of literary, philosophical, or satirical disquisitions. Dr. Johnson therefore has, in my opinion, brought forward an unreasonable objection when he asserts, "the character of Guardian was too narrow and too serious; it might properly enough admit," says he, "both the duties and decencies of life, but seemed not to include literary speculations, and was in some degree violated by merriment and burlesque. What had the Guardian of the Lizards to do with clubs of tall or of little men, with nests of ants, or with Strada's Prolusions?" *

In a family consisting of an old Dowager, of a middle aged and very sensible widow, of four sons, the eldest six and twenty, and of five elegant and accomplished daughters, † there surely must have been field enough for every species of discussion, including science, literature, and even politics. Mr. Nichols has observed, in a manner sufficiently sarcastic, that "in a real situation not very dissimilar to the imaginary one in which Steele here represents himself, the doctor in the family of the Thrales,

* Johnson's Lives, vol. ii. p. 94. † Guardian, No. 5.

took upon him at a greater rate; and the character of Guardian, as he managed it, was *not* too narrow, or too serious. *Steele, it seems, thought himself not at liberty to pay his addresses to Lady Lizard, after the death of her husband, his constituent.*" *

The picture of the Lizard family in the second, fifth, sixth, and thirteenth numbers, is designed by the hand of a master. The figures are full, distinct, and bold, yet harmonize with an effect truly pleasing. The pious and venerable Lady Ambrose, the amiable and domestic widow of Sir Marmaduke, and her five lovely daughters, form an exquisite groupe; these young ladies are at the same time perfectly discriminated: *Jane*, the eldest, is diligent and economical, and in love; *Annabella* satirical and interested, though witty and agreeable; *Cornelia* studious, romantic, and affected; *Betty* inquisitive and vain; *Mary*, the youngest, and the favourite of Old Nestor, generous, sweet-tempered, and volatile. *Sir Harry*, the heir of Sir Marmaduke, a most worthy and useful character, is placed on the foreground, whilst his three brothers, the Courtier, the Barrister, and the Divine, particularized by their manners, features and dispositions, though more retired, appear distinctly to the eye.

* Nichols's edition of the Guardian, vol. i. p. 5.

Digitized by Google

A great proportion of the character which Steele has so ably drawn abounds in *humour*. In the display of this quality, indeed, he must be acknowledged inferior to Addison, both in delicacy and originality; and to Swift, to Fielding, and to Smollet, in strength of brilliancy of colouring. In supporting the arduous character of Sir Roger de Coverley, however, we have found him not unsuccessful; and the *Court of Honour*,* the joint production of Addison and himself, and replete with genuine humour, is conducted on the part of our author with so much ability and address, that it is hardly possible to distinguish his property from that of his friend.

As further specimens of Steele's merit in this department, I would mention the character of Sir Tristram and his associate,† who estimate each other's ability according to the weight of their purses; the ingenious comparison of Gamesters to Bloodhounds;‡ the letter from the Upholders, requesting an order to bury those who are dead in idleness, folly, and pleasure,§ and the very appropriate account of the meeting and repast of the *Terrible Club*. ¶

In the *Spectator*, the speech of the president of

* Tatler, No. 250, 253, 256, 259, 262, 265.
† Tatler, No. 57.
‡ Tatler, No. 62.
§ Tatler, No. 99.
¶ Guardian, No. 113.

Digitized by Google

the Ugly Club on Deformity;* the conduct and conversation of Ephraim the quaker with the Recruiting Officer in the Stage-coach,† and the wholesome discipline inflicted by the Brothers of the Whip on the Gentlemen Coachman,‡ are detailed with easy and unaffected humour.

The letters likewise from *Nathaniel Henroost* and *Anthony Freeman*, describing the deplorable condition of the Hen-pecked;§ the epistle from *Vitruvius*, who in himself exhibits the extreme folly and ludicrous effects of that wanton exercise of the imagination termed *castle-building;*‖ the absurdity of asking advice when predetermined on our plan, and the tedious circumstantiality of professed Story-tellers, are related with infinite pleasantry, and evince close attention to those minutiæ which individualize mankind.

In ridiculing the religious care which many Story-tellers display with regard to unimportant facts, Steele thus exemplifies a habit, which is too often the bane and ruin of all rational conversation.

"A gentleman," says he, "whom I had the honour to be in company with the other day upon some occasion which he was pleased to

* Spectator, No. 32.
† Spect. No. 132.
‡ Spect. No. 498.
§ Spect. No. 212.
‖ Spect. No. 167.

Digitized by Google

take, said, he remembered a very pretty repartee made by a very witty man in King Charles's time upon the like occasion. 'I remember (said he, upon entering into the tale) much about the time of Oates's plot, that a cousin-german of mine and I ware at the Bear in Holborn: no, I am out, it was at the Cross-keys; but Jack Thomson was there, for he was very great with the gentleman who made the answer. But I am sure it was spoken somewhere thereabouts, for we drank a bottle in that neighbourhood every evening; but no matter for all that, the thing is the same; but" *——

Most devoutly is it to be wished, that persons of this description would recollect the pertinent advice of Cowper:

"A tale should be judicious, clear, succinct,
The language plain, the incidents well link'd,
Tell not as new, what every body knows,
And new or old, *still hasten to a close*,
There cent'ring in a focus, round and neat,
Let all your rays of information meet.
What neither yields us profit nor delight,
Is like a nurse's lullaby at night,
Guy Earl of Warwick and fair Eleanore,
Or giant-killing Jack would please me more." †

That Steele himself possessed the art of relating a story with exquisite humour and address, is

* Spectator, No. 138. † Cowper's Poems, vol. i. p. 224.

Digitized by Google

evident from various parts of his periodical papers; but in no one instance is it more conspicuous, than when, ridiculing the follies of the passionate and peevish, he illustrates the subject by the following admirable scene, which, it is said, actually took place in a shop in the Strand, lately kept by Mr. Elmsly; but at the time the Spectator wrote, it was in the possession of an ancestor of the late Paul Vaillant, Esq. The subject of contention was a volume of Massillon's Sermons.

"I am interrupted," exclaims our author, "by the pleasantest scene of anger and the disappointment of it that I have ever known, which happened while I was yet writing, and I overheard as I sat in the back-room at a French bookseller's. There came into the shop a very learned man, with an erect solemn air; and, though a person of great parts otherwise, slow in understanding any thing which makes against himself. The composure of the faulty man, and the whimsical perplexity of him that was justly angry, is perfectly new. After turning over many volumes, said the seller to the buyer, 'Sir, you know I have long asked you to send me back the first volume of French sermons I formerly lent you.' 'Sir,' said the chapman, 'I have often looked for it, but cannot find it; it is certainly lost, and

Digitized by Google

I know not to whom I lent it, it is so many years ago.'—'Then, sir, here is the other volume; I'll send you home that, and please to pay for both.' 'My friend,' replied he, 'canst thou be so senseless as not to know that one volume is as imperperfect in my library as in your shop?—Yes, sir, but it is you have lost the first volume; and, to be short, I will be paid.—'Sir,' answered the chapman, 'you are a young man, your book is lost; and learn by this little loss to bear much greater adversities, which you must expect to meet with.—'Yes, I'll bear when I must, but I have not lost now, for I say you have it, and shall pay me.'—'Friend, you grow warm; I tell you, the book is lost; and I foresee, in the course even of a prosperous life, that you will meet afflictions to make you mad, if you cannot bear this trifle.' 'Sir, there is, in this case, no need of bearing, for you have the book.'—'I say, sir, I have not the book; but your passion will not let you hear enough to be informed that I have it not. Learn resignation of yourself to the distresses of this life: nay, do not fret and fume; it is my duty to tell you, that you are of an impatient spirit, and an impatient spirit is never without woe.'—'Was ever any thing like this?'—'Yes, sir, there have been many things like this: the loss is but a trifle, but your temper is wanton, and incapable

Digitized by Google

of the least pain; therefore let me advise you, be patient; the book is lost, but do not you for that reason lose yourself."*

The keeping of this scene, to use a technical term, is admirably sustained; and a lesson of much utility may be drawn from the occurrence, as it teaches that even in a just cause, impatience and anger defeat themselves.

It is remarkable, that near a century ago the fair sex felt the same propensity to go uncovered, which they have lately exhibited in so extraordinary a degree. The untuckered stays and the short petticoat furnished abundant food for the satire of Steele and Addison, who endeavoured, and probably not without effect, to raise the one and lower the other. The following letter on the subject, which Sir Richard addresses to himself, I consider as a peculiarly happy instance of his wit and humour:—

"MOST WORTHY SIR,

"BEING informed that the Eveites daily increase, and that fig-leaves are shortly coming into fashion, I have hired me a piece of ground and planted it with fig-trees, the soil being naturally productive of them. I hope, good sir, you will

* Spectator, No. 438.

Digitized by Google

so far encourage my new project, as to acquaint the ladies, that I have now by me a choice collection of fig-leaves of all sorts and sizes, of a delicate texture, and a lovely bright verdure, beautifully scolloped at the extremities, and most curiously wrought with variety of slender fibres, ranged in beautiful meanders and windings. I have some very cool ones for summer, so transparently thin, that you may see through them, and others of a thicker substance for winter; I have likewise some very small ones of a particular species for little misses. So that I do not question but to give general satisfaction to all ladies whatsoever, that please to repair to me at the sign of the Adam and Eve, near Cupid's gardens. If you will favour me with the insertion of this in your Guardian, I will make your favourite, the Sparkler,* a present of some of the choicest fig-leaves I have, and lay before her feet the primitiæ of my new garden; and if you bring me a great many customers for my leaves, I promise you my figs shall be at your service.

I am, WORTHY SIR,
Your worship's most obedient,
humble servant,
ANTHONY EVER-GREEN.

* Mary, Lady Lisard's youngest daughter.

Digitized by Google

"N.B. I am now rearing up a set of fine furbelowed dock-leaves, which will be exceeding proper for old women, and superannuated maids; those plants having two excellent good properties; the one, that they flourish best in dry ground; the other, that being clothed with several integuments of downy surfaces, they are exceeding warm and cherishing." *

To correct with success the foibles and follies of mankind, it is necessary, by ludicrous association and colouring, to render them the mark of laughter and contempt. The absurd fashion just mentioned, therefore, our author endeavours to discredit by the means best adapted to the purpose. On more serious occasions, where vice itself obtrudes, he has assumed a correspondent tone, and inflicted the punishment due to its enormity.

Nothing more effectually tends to impress upon the mind the precepts of wisdom and virtue, than examples of excellence or error drawn from the bosom of real life. To the moralist, therefore, a knowledge of the world, and a facility of delineating and supporting character, must ever be of inestimable value. That Steele possessed these requisites, together with a considerable portion

* Guardian, No. 146.

Digitized by Google

of wit and humour, we have already shewn; and if to these we add, what will be more fully depicted in the succeeding essay, that of all his compositions the objects were such as to improve and polish society, the great merit and utility of his writings will be fully and readily allowed.

Digitized by Google

PART II.

ESSAY VI.

ON THE ETHICS AND MORALITY OF STEELE.

THOUGH in his life Steele was by no means correct, and was guilty of many irregularities which ultimately entailed upon him poverty and irritation of mind, in his writings he was uniformly the friend of virtue, propriety, and good sense. His periodical essays are, without exception, directed to the most useful purposes, to meliorate the condition of society, to ridicule folly and abash vice. To the morality inculcated in these publications, therefore, his own, and every succeeding generation owes much; "nor can they," says a celebrated writer, "ever wholly lose their beneficial effects, while they continue to be among the first books by which both sexes are initiated in the elegancies of knowledge."*

There are few topics relative to the decencies

* Johnson's Lives, vol. ii. p. 86.

Digitized by Google

and duties of domestic life which have escaped the observation of Steele. "I must confess," says he, "it has been a most exquisite pleasure to me to frame characters of domestic life, and put those parts of it which are least observed into an agreeable view; to inquire into the seeds of vanity and affectation; to lay before the readers the emptiness of ambition: in a word, to trace human life through all its mazes and recesses, and shew much shorter methods than men ordinarily practise, to be happy, agreeable, and great." *

Happiness in social life depends more upon attention to minute and apparently trivial circumstances than is usually imagined. Those slight but daily offices in which affection delights to be employed, and those courtesies and civilities which politeness and good breeding dictate, are absolutely essential to our comfort and tranquillity. Freedom from vice, or even the possession of great ability, and many positive virtues, will neither secure happiness to the individual, nor to those who surround him, unless combined with good temper, good breeding, and urbanity. For, to use the language of Cowper,

* Tatler, No. 271.

Digitized by Google

It is not timber, lead and stone,
An architect requires alone,
To finish a great building,
The palace were but half complete,
Could he by any chance forget
The carving and the gilding.

A similarity of mind,
Or something not to be defin'd,
First rivets our attention!
So, manners decent and polite,
The same we practis'd at first sight,
'Must save it from declension.' *

Our author has therefore with great judgment frequently insisted upon the observance of what may be termed the minor duties; the neglect of which occasions hourly vexation, and pollutes the very sources of pleasure. He has developed in a clear manner the origin of our defalcations of this kind, and the means by which they may be generally avoided. In his observations on good-breeding he places in a strong light the numerous advantages arising from a familiar acquaintance with the modes of life, and with the graces of manner and conversation. "We see a world of pains taken," he observes, "and the best years of life spent in collecting a set of thoughts in a college for the conduct of life; and, after all, the man so qualified shall hesitate in his speech

* Hayley's Life of Cowper, vol. i. p. 220.

Digitized by Google

to a good suit of clothes, and want common sense before an agreeable woman. Hence it is, that wisdom, valour, justice, and learning, cannot keep a man in countenance that is possessed with these excellencies, if he wants that inferior art of life and behaviour called Good-breeding. A man endowed with great perfections, without this, is like one who has his pockets full of gold, but always wants change for his ordinary occasions."* To render the beauty and utility of politeness more apparent, he dwells at some length upon the violations of decorum, and humorously exposes the rudeness and folly of loud laughing and speaking, of singing, whispering, &c. in mixed society.† With much address he has laid open the sources of those petty quarrels which, though springing from the most unimportant events, more frequently than those resulting from serious causes, plant the germs of disappointment and disgust. In the persons of Tranquillus and his lady, the sister of Bickerstaff, he has very delicately insinuated this truth; and has formed them, likewise, very pleasing models of conjugal affection and esteem.‡

Lessons on attentive conduct and social kindness; on forbearance, urbanity, and sweetness

* Tatler, No. 30. † Spectator, No. 148.
‡ Tatler, No. 79 and 85.

Digitized by Google

of disposition, are scattered in such profusion through the writings of Sir Richard, that the task of selection becomes difficult. On envy,* impudence, and good humour;† on generosity,‡ detraction,§ and avarice;‖ on benevolence,¶ charity,** and parental affection,†† his precepts cannot be too sedulously studied. The pernicious consequences of excessive avarice, and the reciprocal duties of father and son, of the care of parents due to their children, and the piety of children towards their parents, he has happily illustrated by the story of the Valentines of Germany;‡‡ whilst in another part he has presented us with the following just and eloquently written reflections.

"It is the most beautiful object," he observes, "the eyes of man can behold, to see a man of worth and his son live in an entire unreserved correspondence. The mutual kindness and affection between them, give an inexpressible satisfaction to all who know them. It is a sublime pleasure which increases by the participation. It is as sacred as friendship, as pleasurable as love, and as joyful as religion. This state of

* Spectator, No. 19 and 20. † Spectator, No. 20.
‡ Spectator, No. 346. § Spectator, No. 348.
‖ Spect. No. 426. ¶ Spect. No. 248. ** Spect. No. 294.
†† Spect. No. 192. ‡‡ Spectator, No. 426.

Digitized by Google

mind does not only dissipate sorrow, which would be extreme without it, but enlarges pleasures which would otherwise be contemptible. The most indifferent thing has its force and beauty when it is spoke by a kind father, and an insignificant trifle has its weight when offered by a dutiful child. I know not how to express it, but I think I may call it a 'transplanted self-love.' All the enjoyments and sufferings which a man meets with are regarded only as they concern him in the relation he has to another. A man's very honour receives a new value to him, when he thinks that, when he is in his grave, it will be had in remembrance that such an action was done by such a one's father. Such considerations sweeten the old man's evening, and his soliloquy delights him when he can say to himself, "No man can tell my child his father was either unmerciful or unjust. My son shall meet many a man who shall say to him, 'I was obliged to thy father, and be my child a friend to his child for ever.' *"

A consolation this, truly rational and delightful, and which implies not only a conscious sense in the parent of having done well, but a moral certainty likewise that his son shall rival him in

* Spectator, No. 192.

Digitized by Google

the public esteem. There is something in the expression and manner at the close of this fine passage, though not in the sentiment, which strongly recals to my recollection the impressive prayer of Hector in the Iliad for his son, as translated by the admirable Cowper. Had moral virtue been the object of the supplication, instead of military renown, it had approximated nearer to our purpose; yet as a specimen of the noblest translation of the Grecian bard, I shall not, however slight the coincidence, withhold it; the casual association gave me pleasure, and, I doubt not, will produce a similar emotion in the reader.

> Oh Jove! and all ye gods! grant this my son
> To prove, like me, pre-eminent in Troy!
> In valour such, and firmness of command!
> Be he extoll'd, when he returns from fight,
> As far his sire's superior! may he slay
> His enemy, bring home his gory spoils,
> And may his mother's heart o'erflow with joy!
>
> Iliad, Book vi.

Against the great and prevailing vices of his day Steele has written with undaunted energy and perseverance, although repeatedly threatened by those who, conscious of their guilt supposed themselves the objects of his censure. *Gamesters*, *Sharpers*, and *Swindlers*, a formidable body, and who mingled in the highest ranks of society, encouraged by those who ought to have shunned

Digitized by Google

them with contempt and abhorrence, he has exposed in a series of essays in the Tatler with unsparing keenness and humour. That he contributed in a very great degree to repress the vice of gaming, and to place in a proper light the characters of those who professed this degrading pursuit, is evident from contemporary history and the violence of the opposition which he incurred. In the last number of the Tatler, speaking of those who had publicly declared, that, on account of his satire on gaming, they would support any man who should insult him, he adds, "when I mention this subject, I hope Major General Davenport, Brigadier Bisset, and my Lord Forbes, will accept of my thanks for their frequent good offices, in professing their readiness to partake any danger that should befal me in so just an undertaking, as the endeavour to banish fraud and cozenage from the presence and conversation of gentlemen." Lord Forbes, says Mr. Nichols, happened to be in company with the two military gentlemen just mentioned in St. James's coffee-house, when two or three well-dressed men, all unknown to his lordship or his company, came into the room, and, in a public outrageous manner, abused Captain Steele as the author of the Tatler. One of them, with great audacity and vehemence, swore that he would

Digitized by Google

cut Steele's throat, or teach him better manners. "In this country," said Lord Forbes, "you will find it easier to cut a purse than to cut a throat." His brother officers instantly joined with his lordship, and turned the cut-throats out of the coffee-house with every mark of disgrace.*

Sir Richard felt much self-approbation and pleasure from his success in expelling these miscreants from society; and in his Apology for himself and his writings, when refuting a charge brought against him in the House of Commons for injuriously reflecting on the nobility and gentry, he observes in a style of exultation:

"It would be a contradiction to all Mr. Steele's past writings, to speak to the disadvantage of the nobility and gentry. The war that the Tatler brought upon himself, for stigmatizing and expelling sharpers out of their company, is a merit towards them that will outweigh this allegation.—That gamesters, knaves, and pick-pockets, are no longer the men of fashion, or mingled with so good an air among people of quality as formerly, is much owing to Mr. Steele—more than to any other author, transcriber, or publisher, that ever made use of pen and ink."†

* Nichols's Tatler, vol. iv. p. 545.
† Apology, 4to. 1714, p. 84.

Digitized by Google

Another fashionable vice which loudly called for animadversion was, *Duelling;* on which our author has written with uncommon animation, and in a vein of strong wit and invective.* Of its fallacy and incompetency, as a mode of ascertaining truth, or inflicting punishment, he has brought forward ample proof, and drawn a striking picture of the misery and remorse which it ought ever to entail. On this subject he has written from painful experience; for whilst in the Coldstream regiment, under Col. Cutts, a brother officer acquainted him with his resolution of immediately challenging a gentleman by whom he imagined he had been offended. Steele endeavoured, and with success, to avert his intention. The companions of this young man, however, shortly afterwards induced him to believe that Steele had been actuated in this advice by a partiality to his opponent, and that his own honour had been sacrificed by submitting to the decision. In consequence of this unfortunate suggestion, he had the folly to challenge Steele himself, who, just recovering from a violent fever, tried by every species of raillery and ridicule, though in vain, to dissuade him from his purpose. Skilful, however, in the use of his weapon, and trusting that he should be

* Tatler, No. 25, 26, 28, 30, 31, and 39.

Digitized by Google

able to chastise the insolence of this young man without endangering his life, he reluctantly, and in direct opposition to his avowed principles and feelings, met him in the field. After parrying his thrusts for some time, Steele endeavoured to disarm him; but in the attempt, owing to the youth turning suddenly to parry, he unfortunately ran him through the body. The wound, though not ultimately mortal, long threatened the life of his intemperate adversary; and the sorrow and anxiety that he underwent, during this dreadful period of uncertainty, rendered his abhorrence of the mischievous practice still more deep and durable.

On vices more frequent in the lower classes of mankind, though, alas! no strangers to any rank of society, he has expatiated in a tone of just severity. Drunkenness and cruelty more especially meet his decided anathema; * and he has reprobated with much feeling and indignation many of the savage diversions which, to the disgrace of this kingdom, are yet tolerated among its people.

Numerous and highly valuable are the directions that he has given for the rational enjoyment of life. Of those who are eager to drink deep of

* Tatler, No. 241, 124, &c.

Digitized by Google

its pleasures, few are able to ascertain or pursue the plan best calculated to attain their wishes. Sensual delight is the object generally in view; an object which, after transient possession, seldom fails to plant the sensation of languor, indifference, or disgust. Existence becomes therefore vapid or even intolerable; and the miserable sufferer flies for relief to stimulations still more gross and intense, which, again soon mocking his purpose, leave him spiritless and exhausted, a wretch incapable of further gratification, and writhing under the horrors of self-accumulated pain and anguish. To point out therefore, and recommend, by means best adapted to allure, the calm and permanent enjoyments of intellectual pursuit; to teach his readers how to *relish* their being without the transport of some passion, or the gratification of some appetite, were views worthy of the moral pen of Steele; and in which his success has been such, as justly to denominate him a firm friend to the best interests of his country. It is a common opinion among men of business and pleasure, that at some future period they can suddenly drop their respective passions and pursuits, and philosophically sink into the vale of peace and retirement. They fondly imagine, that change of place and circumstances will necessarily be followed by different modes of

Digitized by Google

thinking and acting, forgetting that their habits and appetites, those tyrants of the human soul, are not to be shaken off by the first impulse of volition; but, unless corrected in the busy walks of life, and superseded by far different associations, will pursue them round the globe, and haunt them in their deepest solitudes:

> What wanderer from his native land
> E'er left himself behind? *

On this subject Steele has bestowed many pertinent and ingenious thoughts, and particularly in N° 27 of the Spectator; where, after having dwelt at some length on the topic, he adds the following very accurate remark:

"We can never live to our satisfaction in the deepest retirement, unless we are capable of living so, in some measure, amidst the noise and business of the world."

I do not think it will be necessary to accumulate further instances of Steele's attention to the moral duties: they are to be found in almost every page of his writings, and were indeed the chief object and scope of all his compositions. "As for my labours," says he, "if they can but wear one impertinence out of human life, destroy a single vice, or give a morning's cheerfulness to

* Hastings's Imitation of Horace, Book ii. Ode 16. Printed, with his own corrections, in the European Magazine, vol. xxiii. p. 312.

Digitized by Google

an honest mind; in short, if the world can be but one virtue the better, or in any degree less vicious, or receive from them the smallest addition to their innocent diversions; I shall not think my pains, or indeed my life, to have been spent in vain." *

Having now considered at some length the principal features of Sir Richard Steele's literary character, as a writer of periodical essays; we may, as the result of our enquiry, affirm, that if he cannot be distinguished as a man of profound learning, he was at least intimate with the authors of ancient Rome, and possessed a keen and critical relish of their elegancies and beauties.

In vigour, versatility, and penetration of intellect, he was inferior to none of his contemporaries who figured in the department of general literature; and though in purity and delicacy of taste, he was certainly not upon a level with Addison, he was, even in these qualities, superior to most of the then literary world. His countrymen, therefore, justly and deservedly considered him as an able *arbiter elegantiarum*, and in general submitted to his decisions with deference and esteem.

If in his style he was neither peculiarly po-

* Tatler, No. 89.

Digitized by Google

lished nor correct, he was seldom deficient in perspicuity, and his periods usually flow with spirit and vivacity.

His imagination was fertile, and sometimes brilliant; his memory strong and capacious; his powers of ratiocination for the most part clear and persuasive, and his humour and wit, if not conspicuously elegant and chaste, were, at least, original, full of life, and well-applied.

The great utility of his compositions, however, arises principally from his fertility in the delineation of character, as founded on an extensive knowledge of mankind and its varieties. These sketches, which every where diversify his writings, and give them a dramatic cast, are rendered subservient to the best purposes, by teaching through example, of all modes the most impressive, the noblest lessons of moral wisdom and domestic virtue.

When we duly reflect, therefore, that the long series of Essays, including the Tatler, Spectator, and Guardian, was originally planned, and uniformly conducted by Sir Richard Steele; that to him we owe the incorporation and united exertion of the first literary talents of his time (talents ever directed, under his superintendance and support, towards the real improvement of his species;) and that, notwithstanding much calumny

Digitized by Google

and political opposition, much expence and hazard, he vigorously persevered in carrying his views into execution; we shall, without doubt, be convinced, that few men have deserved better of society; and that no one, every circumstance considered, can with greater propriety be termed a benefactor to mankind.

Digitized by Google

PART III.

ESSAY I.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF ADDISON.

JOSEPH ADDISON was the eldest son of the Reverend Launcelot Addison, Dean of Lichfield; and was born on the first of May, 1672, at Milston, near Ambresbury in Wiltshire, of which place his father was then rector.* He was baptized on the day of his birth, owing to his apparently weak state, which threatened a speedy termination to his existence.†

* Dr. Launcelot Addison lived to the age of 71, and at his death, in 1703, left three sons; 1. Joseph; 2. Gulston, who died governor of Fort George in the East Indies; 3. Launcelot, who was first entered in Queen's College, and afterwards master of arts and fellow of Magdalen College in Oxford; and one daughter, Dorothy, first married to Dr. Sartré, formerly minister of Montpelier, and afterwards prebendary of Westminster; and, secondly, to Daniel Combes, Esq. She died March 2, 1750, and left her estate, after the payment of some legacies, for the erection of a monument for her brother Joseph in Westminster Abbey.

† Mr. Tyers even asserts, that he was laid out for dead as soon as he was born.

Digitized by Google

Dr. Addison was a man of considerable learning, of amiable manners and unaffected piety; he was consequently solicitous that his children should imbibe the purest principles of virtue and religion, and he exerted every effort of example and precept to render them what he wished. Assuming no portion of harshness on the one hand, nor too much relaxing the reins of discipline on the other, he became the object of united love and reverence to all his family. Steele, who was well acquainted with the Dean, has given us a most lively and exquisite picture of his parental and domestic conduct.

"I remember, among all my acquaintance," says he, "but one man whom I have thought to live with his children with equanimity and a good grace. He had three sons and one daughter, whom he bred with all the care imaginable in a liberal and ingenuous way. I have often heard him say, he had the weakness to love one much better than the other, but that he took as much pains to correct that as any other criminal passion that could arise in his mind. His method was, to make it the only pretension in his children to his favour, to be kind to each other; and he would tell them, that he who was the best brother, he would reckon the best son. This

Digitized by Google

turned their thoughts into an emulation for the superiority in kind and tender affection towards each other. The boys behaved themselves very early with a manly friendship; and their sister, instead of the gross familiarities and impertinent freedoms in behaviour usual in other houses, was always treated by them with as much complaisance as any other young lady of their acquaintance. It was an unspeakable pleasure to visit, or sit at a meal, in that family. I have often seen the old man's heart flow at his eyes with joy, upon occasions which would appear indifferent to such as were strangers to the turn of his mind; but a very slight accident, wherein he saw his children's good-will to one another, created in him the god-like pleasure of loving them, because they loved each other. This great command of himself, in hiding his first impulse to partiality, at last improved to a steady justice towards them; and that, which at first was but an expedient to correct his weakness, was afterwards the measure of his virtue."*

To this judicious treatment of his children in their earliest years, we owe that sweetness of disposition, that philanthropy and piety which distinguished his son Joseph through life. As the

* Tatler, No. 235.

Doctor was, however, much employed in the necessary and useful duties of a parish priest, and a great portion of his leisure was devoted to compositions in defence of the established church, young Addison, when arrived at a proper age for public tuition, was placed under the care of the Rev. Mr. Nash, who at that time kept a school at Ambresbury. He had resided some time, and made no inconsiderable progress with this gentleman, when he was removed by the wish of his father to a larger seminary at Salisbury, under the superintendance of Mr. Taylor.

Here, however, he remained not long; for in 1683, when he had entered his twelfth year, his father, now just promoted to the deanery of Lichfield, and wishing to have his son nearer his new residence, and more beneath his eye, committed him to the care of Mr. Shaw, master of the grammar school in that city, and father of the late Dr. Peter Shaw.

In this situation, nothing more material is recorded of him, than his enterprize and courage in leading and conducting successfully a plan for *barring-out* his master; a disorderly privilege which, until the middle of the last century, universally prevailed in our principal seminaries for education; where the boys, exulting at the re-

Digitized by Google

approach of their periodical liberty, and unwilling to wait its regular commencement, seized upon the school some days previous to the vacation; violently excluded their preceptor by barricading the doors, and, not content with the simple possession of the fortress, usually defied and ridiculed him from its windows. As this practice was, however, for the most part, an expected occurrence, the master, generally with great good humour, forgave the attempt, and sometimes even favoured the design by assuming the appearance of singular precaution, to defeat which much manœuvre and stratagem became necessary on the part of the conspirators.

A short period only had elapsed, when he was again removed, and left Lichfield for the Charter House, over which then presided Dr. Ellis, a man of very respectable literature and abilities. There are few things more prejudicial to improvement in boys than a rapid transition from school to school; neither the grammar nor the modes of teaching are probably alike; it is usually necessary to return upon the ground already passed; much time is therefore wasted in acquiring the new method, and intricacy and confusion but too often ensue. Addison, however, seems happily to have escaped the common consequences of

Digitized by Google

these frequent changes, the result probably, on the part of his father, rather of necessity than of choice. It was in this school, as we have already mentioned in an early part of our volume, that he formed an intimacy with Sir Richard Steele, which was nearly durable as his life, and productive of incalculable benefit both to themselves and the public.

It is a decided proof of the early proficiency of Addison, that, at the age of fifteen, he was deemed qualified for an University. Accordingly, in the year 1687, he relinquished the Chartreux for Oxford, and was entered of Queen's College, formerly the seat of his father's studies.

A scene now opened upon our young collegian, perfectly adapted to his genius. Oxford has ever been celebrated for its peculiar attention to *classical* learning; and Addison, who had already imbibed a strong relish for the best writers of Greece and Rome, here found the encouragement, and all the opportunities for improvement he could wish. He had resided about two years at Queen's College, when a copy of some verses that he had written in the Latin language* having accidentally fallen into the hands of Dr. Lancaster, then fellow, and afterwards

* Inauguratio Regis Gulielmi.

Digitized by Google

provost of Queen's, he was so much struck with their merit, that he resolved to patronize their author, and shortly succeeded in procuring his admission into Magdalen College, where he was elected a demy in July 1689, a situation nearly similar to that which is elsewhere designated by the appellation of scholar.

In this college, where he took the degree of Master of Arts on February 14, 1693, he prosecuted his classical studies with uncommon ardour; and in a short time acquired a reputation for Latin poetry, more extensive and splendid than had hitherto attended any English name.

To these Latin compositions he appears to have been very partial. He collected them with great care in the second volume of the *Musæ Anglicanæ*, and sent them as a present to the celebrated Boileau, "who," observes Mr. Tickell, "from that time conceived an opinion of the English genius for poetry;" an assertion most probably without foundation, or built upon a mere compliment, as Boileau is well known to have held modern Latin poetry in utter contempt.

These juvenile productions of Addison are in number eight. 1st. Peace restored to Europe under the auspices of William; 2dly. A description of the Barometer; 3dly. The Battle of the Pigmies and the Cranes; 4thly. On the Resur-

Digitized by Google

nection, descriptive of a painting over the altar in Magdalen College, Oxford; 5thly. The Bowling Green; 6thly. An Ode to Dr. Hannes, an ingenious physician and poet; 7thly. The Puppet Show; 8thly. Ode to Dr. Burnet, the celebrated author of the Theory of the Earth.*

Of the topics thus chosen, the first, the fourth and the eighth are susceptible of the finest strokes of sublimity and imagination; but it must be affirmed, that Addison has by no means done them justice. His diction and versification are indeed classical and harmonious; but the enthusiasm which liberty and religion should inspire in the mind of a poet is in vain sought for. If on subjects of this exalted nature he be thought deficient, it cannot be expected that much fancy or illustration should decorate such themes as *The Barometer*, *The Bowling Green*, or *The Puppet Show*. They might, however, with much propriety have been seasoned both with satire and humour; they have neither, and are only valuable for precision in description, and for neatness and purity in language.

Many of our poets, both anterior to and since the days of Addison, have, in an early period of

* These Pieces have been translated into English, by Dr. George Sewell, Mr. Newcomb, and Nicholas Amhurst, Esq. and lately the Pygmæo-Gerano-Machia has received a very elegant version from the pen of Dr. Beattie.

Digitized by Google

life, gained celebrity by the composition of Latin verse. The epigrams and hendecasyllables of Leland, the first Englishman who after the restoration of letters wrote Latin poetry with any pretensions to classical taste, have occasionally much elegance and beauty.* *Milton's Poemata*, together with great melody and classic purity, possess the merit of weight of sentiment and vigour of imagination; qualities seldom found in the Latin poetry of the moderns. Of this encomium the English reader will, I hope, shortly be able to ascertain the propriety through the version of the late Mr. Cowper, who, from the specimens brought forward by Mr. Hayley,† seems happily to have transfused the very spirit

* These epithets may not unfrequently be applied to his Latin prose, of which the following is a specimen descriptive of Guy's Cliff: *Nemusculum ibidem opacum, fontes liquidi et gemmei, prata florida, antra muscosa, rivi levis et per saxa decursus, nec non solitudo et quies Musis amicissima;* a passage which makes a pleasing, though a more homely appearance in his own old English, mixed according to the general custom of his times with a little Latin. *It is a place meet for the Muses; there is Sylence; a praty wood; antra in vivo saxo (grottoes in the living rock;) the river roling over the stones with a praty noise.*

Leland's Itinerary, vol. iv. p. 66.

His epigrams and other Poems were published at London in 4to, 1589, by Thomas Newton of Cheshire, and entitled, *Principium ac illustrium aliquot et eruditorum in Anglia virorum Encomia, Trophæa, Genethliaca et Epithalamia.*

† In his Life of Milton, 4to.

Digitized by Google

of Milton. *May's* continuation of the Pharsalia of Lucan is a successful imitation of the lofty sentiment, the nervous and sonorous hexameters of the republican bard; and Cowley, though frequently defective in taste and purity, from causes similar to those which have injured the productions of his native Muse, has sometimes passages which display the sweetness and simplicity of the chastest models.

In melody, correctness, and selection of language, Addison may be esteemed equal to Milton, and superior to May and Cowley; but inferior to all, and especially to the first, in fertility of fancy and energy of thought. Of that playful humour and exquisite imagination, which so admirably diversify the periodical compositions of our author, there are no traces discoverable in these juvenile effusions.

That their composition was, however, of essential service toward improving his own taste, by rendering him perfectly familiar with the style and manner of the best poets of Rome, and that his success in this department contributed not a little to excite in the public mind a just relish for classical simplicity and correctness, cannot be denied. If, restricted by the trammels of a dead language, he has exhibited not much invention or fancy, he, at least, presented his contempora-

Digitized by Google

nies with very chaste imitations, and entirely void of extravagance and conceit, the then fashionable vices of the literary world.

"An early acquaintance with the Classics," justly remarks Mr. Tickell, "is what may be called the good-breeding of poetry, as it gives a certain gracefulness which never forsakes a mind that contracted it in youth, but is seldom or never hit by those who would learn it too late. Addison first distinguished himself by his Latin compositions, published in the *Musæ Anglicanæ;* and was admired as one of the best authors since the Augustan age, in the two universities, and the greatest part of Europe, before he was talked of as a poet in town. There is not perhaps any harder task than to tame the natural wildness of wit, and to civilize the fancy. The generality of our old English poets abound in forced conceits and affected phrases; and even those who are said to come the nearest to exactness are but too often fond of unnatural beauties, and aim at something better than perfection. If Mr. Addison's example and precepts be the occasion that there now begins to be a great demand for correctness, we may justly attribute it to his being first fashioned by the ancient models, and familiarized to propriety of thought and chastity of style."*

* Account of the Life and Writings of Addison.

Since the era of Addison, many of our poets have attained great excellence in the composition of Latin verse. They have rivalled him in purity and correctness, and superadded to their pieces the stamp of originality, the impression of their own character and feelings. The moral and pathetic Gray is seen no less in his Roman than his English dress; and of the laureat Warton, it has been justly said by his brother, that he seems to have thought in Latin; and who will deny exquisite merit, and a certain individuality, to the Latin poetry and translations of Sir William Jones and Vincent Bourne?

It was in the twenty-second year of his age that Addison ventured to appear before the bar of the public as an English poet. He then produced some verses addressed to Mr. Dryden; which, as they procured him the notice and approbation of that truly original genius, and of course the applause of others, fully answered his purpose, and highly gratified his feelings. Their poetical merit, however, is trifling, and the rhymes singularly incorrect; in the range of six and thirty lines we have, wrote—thought, song—tongue, gods—woods, limbs—streams, reveal—tell; terminations which are neither addressed to the eye nor to the ear. Pope had not yet

Digitized by Google

commenced* that system of correct and uniformly melodious versification which produced a revolution in the poetical world; and which perhaps, in the present day, has been carried too far, and has attained a polish too brilliant and artificial to be altogether pleasing.

Shortly after this effort, our author ventured upon a translation of the fourth book of the Georgics of Virgil, omitting, however, the pathetic episode of Aristæus. This is a very respectable attempt, and in some respects superior to the version of Dryden, who with much candour gave it due praise, and declared that after Addison's bees, his latter swarm was hardly worth the hiving.

Addison possessed a far more perfect idea of the genius and character of Virgil than Dryden, who has grossly and frequently violated his dignity, simplicity, and grace. In that most exquisite episode the Corycian peasant, where the happy old man is drawn reclined beneath his plane-trees, enjoying their coolness and a summer's feast, Dryden has greatly injured the picture by the introduction of language which suggests rather the carousal of a drunken party than

* His Pastorals were not published until sixteen years after the date of Addison's verses to Dryden.

Digitized by Google

the temperate refreshment which the poor and frugal peasant could bestow.

——ministrantem platanum potantibus umbras.

——a cool retreat
To shade good fellows from the summer's heat.

Into an impropriety of this kind Addison never deviates; and in the present instance he has correctly and elegantly given the sense of his original:

——spreading plane-trees, where supinely laid
He now enjoys the cool, and quaffs beneath the shade.

Dryden was indebted to our young poet for the arguments prefixed to the several books of his Virgil, and for a prefatory "Essay on the Georgics," which, if it display nothing very profound or discriminative, is at least written in an easy and pleasing style, and with a warm and enthusiastic attachment to the subject.*

His succeeding publication in the order of time was, a series of verses addressed to Mr. Henry Sacheverell, who has, until very lately, been confounded with that notorious bigot Dr. Henry Sacheverell; and much surprise has usually been expressed, that characters so dissimilar as were

* The best and most correct analysis of the Georgics of Virgil, is to be found in the *Philological Enquiries* of Mr. Harris.

Digitized by Google

those of Addison and this furious churchman should have been so familiarly associated. In the last octavo edition, however, of Johnson's Lives, dated 1801, there is a note with the initial H. at its close, which proves from a letter found among Dr. Johnson's papers, dated in January, 1784, and written by a lady in Wiltshire, that this "Account of the Greatest English Poets" was not inscribed to the famous Doctor, but to a very ingenious gentleman of the same name, who died young, and was supposed to be a Manksman, owing to his having written the history of the Isle of Man. He left his papers, it is said, to Mr. Addison, and had formed the plan of a tragedy upon the death of Socrates. This lady affirmed her information to have been derived from a Mr. Stephens, who was a fellow of Merton College, a contemporary of, and intimate with Mr. Addison in Oxford, and who died near fifty years ago, a prebendary of Winchester.*

These verses, which, as Johnson observes, exhibit with regard to Sacheverell all the fondness of friendship, include critical sketches of ten poets, Chaucer, Spenser, Cowley, Milton, Waller, Roscommon, Denham, Dryden, Congreve, and Halifax. Why he should have omitted Shakspeare, Butler, and Otway, unrivalled masters in

* Johnson's Lives, vol. ii. p. 77. edition of 1801, 8 vols. 8vo.

Digitized by Google

the regions of fancy, wit, and pathos, it is difficult to conjecture.

The poem is interesting from the subject, and the versification is flowing and tolerably correct; but the diction too often wants dignity, and is sometimes ludicrously familiar, as, for instance, at the commencement of the last two paragraphs,

I'm tir'd with rhiming, and would fain give o'er—
Pye done at length———

To his judgment in discriminating the characters of his Bards, much praise cannot be given. Of Spenser, we are informed,* he had not read a line when he thus presumed to point out his merits; yet, singular as it may appear, it is perhaps more characteristic than any other portrait in the piece. Chaucer is distinguished merely by his powers of exciting merriment, a most inadequate representation of this fine old poet, whose vein of description and pathos is remarkably rich and pure. It is to be regretted that Mr. Tyrwhitt extended not his editorial labours on this great writer beyond the Canterbury Tales.† The wit, the brilliancy, and the fecundity

* By Mr. Spence.

† Mr. Godwin, who has just presented the public with an elaborate Life of Chaucer, would confer no trifling obligation on English literature by undertaking an edition of his favourite poet; whose works, with the exception of the Canterbury Tales, have never yet been published with the care and attention which they deserve.

Digitized by Google

of Cowley, are accurately marked; but the criticism terminates with an ill-placed eulogium on his *pindaric* efforts, which of all his productions are perhaps the least meritorious. Led astray by metaphysical conceits, and the delusive fascinations of intemperate wit, we have lost in Cowley a most interesting author; for where he condescends to drop his far-fetched imagery and glittering thoughts, few poets appear more amiable and tender.

Milton is delineated with animation, and with a just conception of his energy and sublimity; but the first couplet is injured, and, what is singularly unfortunate on such a subject, excites a smile by an injudicious choice of rhyme and language.

Waller is panegyrized beyond all bounds; but the subsequent portrait of Dryden,

> Grown old in rhyme, but charming ev'n in years,

is so truly pleasing, that we forgive the error in criticism which attributes to his dramatic rather than to his miscellaneous compositions the meed of immortality. The comedies and tragedies of Dryden seldom call forth either smiles or tears; his satirical productions have lost much of their interest; and it is principally, if not altogether, to that portion of his works which is distinguished by the title of Fables, that he owes his reputation

Digitized by Google

its a poet with posterity. The vigour, ease, and variety of his versification have, in these his latest effusions, attained a degree of united excellence which has not perhaps been since equalled.

A very short period before the publication of this poem, Congreve had introduced Addison to Charles Montague, afterwards Earl of Halifax, but then Chancellor of the Exchequer; and he concludes his lines with very extravagant compliments to both. Congreve had a rich and exuberant fund of wit; but when our author predicts that the muse of Dryden shall survive in his strains, he had assuredly most egregiously mistaken the genius and talents of his friend.

Montague, before he possessed celebrity as a patron of literature, had paid his devotions to the Muses; and as the surest way to acquire his favour was to praise his verses, the enrolment of his name among the first bards of England, was a passport to promotion which Addison knew he could obtain and did not choose to neglect.

"Many a blandishment," remarks Johnson, "was practised upon Halifax, which he would never have known, had he no other attractions than those of his poetry, of which a short time has withered the beauties. It would now be esteemed no honour, by a contributor to the monthly bundles of verses, to be told, that, in

Digitized by Google

strains either familiar or solemn, he sings like Montague." *

It was the intention of Addison at this period, as he evidently insinuates in the concluding lines of the poem that we have just been commenting upon, to enter into holy orders. The wishes of his father had taught him to look forward to this profession, and there were several members of the university, who, justly estimating his great piety and modesty, were desirous of seeing him in the pulpit. The very qualities, however, which so strongly recommended him to their esteem were those which deterred him from adopting their advice. He entertained so exalted an idea of the responsibility and awful duties of the clerical function, and such an humble conception of his own merits and qualifications, that he involuntarily shrunk back from the charge.

This reluctance to embrace the important offices of the priesthood was greatly strengthened by the interference of Mr. Montague, who, desirous of Addison's talents and literature in a civil department, advised him to decline the church, and actually wrote to the head of the college requesting he would not insist upon Mr. Addison's going into orders; declaring that the depravity and corruption of those engaged in civil employments

* Johnson's Lives, vol. ii. p. 46.

Digitized by Google

were such, owing to their want of a liberal education, that he thought it necessary for the benefit of his country, that Mr. Addison's abilities should be directed into a political channel; and concluded his letter by observing, that however he might be represented as no friend to the church, he would never do it any other injury than keeping Mr. Addison out of it.

That Addison would have made a most conscientious clergyman, that he would have fulfilled all the *real* duties of his situation, and proved a bright example in the circle to which he was attached, there can be no reason to doubt. His powers, however, must necessarily have been much circumscribed; for as he was through life strongly and uniformly the champion of freedom, and a warm friend to toleration, at a period too when high-church doctrines very generally prevailed, it is not probable that he would have been considered as an accession by the majority of the establishment, nor would he readily have reached any elevated station. And though we justly entertain a very high idea of the utility of a parish priest, it will not, I should imagine, be contended, that in the discharge of such an office, his exquisite talents could have had free scope, or that he would have been in his proper sphere when writing sermons for a country congregation.

In fact, the piety and ethics of Addison made,

Digitized by Google

through the medium of his admirable essays, a stronger impression on the public mind by the very circumstance of their proceeding from a layman. Surrounded as they are with every fascinating charm which humour, grace, and elegance could bestow, they became infinitely more diffused, more persuasive, popular, and useful, and produced a more beneficial change upon life and manners, than could have been affected by any official communication, however weighty or however excellent.

It was shortly after his connection with Montague had been thus matured, and in the year 1695, that our author published his poem on King William, with an introduction in rhyme in praise of Lord Keeper Somers. There is much spirit in the versification of this piece, and the sentiments glow with a warm and rational attachment to freedom and his country. The invocation to Lewis the XIVth is particularly striking, and, with the change of but two words, applies with equal precision to the present imperious ruler of the Gauls, who, intoxicated with the fumes of unbounded ambition, has just driven the British government to resume the sword in defence of her best and dearest rights; in short, of her very existence as an independent nation: *

* Written on June 6th, 1803.

Digitized by Google

At length, proud "man," ambitious "Consul," cease
To plague mankind, and trouble Europe's peace;
Think on the structures which thy pride has ras'd,
On towns unpeopled, and on fields laid waste;
Think on the heaps of corps, and streams of blood,
On every guilty plain, and purple flood,
Thy arms have made; and cease an impious war,
Nor waste the lives entrusted to thy care.

Nor will the following lines from the same nervous poem be less pertinent or less just when applied to our beloved sovereign; for it may be truly asserted, that on the successful exertions of this country in the present war depends the liberty of Europe:

His toils, for no ignoble ends design'd,
Promote the *common welfare* of mankind;
No wild ambition moves, but Europe's fears,
The cries of orphans, and the widows' tears:
Oppressed "Europe" gives the first alarms,
And *injur'd justice* sets him in his arms:
His conquests freedom to the world afford,
And nations bless the labours of his sword.

Lord Somers was so much pleased with this poem, and with the personal attachment expressed by Addison, that, knowing his inclination to visit the continent, and his inability to carry his wishes into execution, from the insufficiency of his finances, he generously procured him, in 1699, an annual pension from the crown of three hundred

Digitized by Google

pounds, for the express purpose of enabling him to travel.

Having spent a year at Blois with the view of acquiring the French language, he hastened into Italy, a country capable of affording the highest gratifications to a mind imbued with classical literature. To Addison, who was peculiarly intimate with Roman history and poetry, and who possessed a high relish for the beauties of painting and sculpture, every step recalled some pleasing association, some exquisite passage from a favourite author, or gave ample scope for reflection on the awful vicissitudes of human greatness.

While wandering amidst the picturesque scenery of this enchanting country, he composed his poetical letter to Lord Halifax, of which, when writing to his friend Edward Wortley Montagu, in 1701, he thus speaks:

"I am just now arrived at Geneva by a very troublesome journey over the Alps, where I have been for some days together shivering among the eternal snows. My head is still giddy with mountains and precipices, and you can't imagine how much I am pleased with the sight of a plain, that is as agreeable to me at present, as a shore was about a year ago after our tempest at Genoa. During my passage over the mountains, I made a Rhyming Epistle to my Lord Halifax, which per-

Digitized by Google

haps I will trouble you with the sight of, if I dont find it to be nonsense upon a review. You will think it, I dare say, as extraordinary a thing to make a copy of verses in a voyage over the Alps, as to write an heroic poem in a hackney-coach; and I believe I am the first that ever thought of Parnassus on Mount Sennis."*

This Epistle, if he had written nothing else, ought to have acquired for him the reputation of a good poet. Those who have attempted to depreciate the poetry of Addison, have not duly considered the merits of this production. Its versification is remarkably sweet and polished, its vein of description usually rich and clear, and its sentiments often pathetic, and sometimes even sublime. We see Addison, with the ardent enthusiasm of a mind fresh from the study of the classics, exploring with unwearied fondness and assiduity the neglected reliques of antiquity, and tracing every stream and mountain recorded in the songs of the Bard.

His praises of liberty break forth with uncommon warmth and beauty; with that energy of phrase and thought which only genuine emotion can supply. After dwelling with rapture on those treasures of nature and art which no other

* See a Fac-simile of the entire letter in *Addisoniana*, vol. i.

Digitized by Google

country save Italy can produce, he immediately presents us with a series of lines that not even the Muse of Cowper has surpassed. To check the progress of fastidious criticism, which allows not merit where it is due, I shall transcribe the lines alluded to. It is the best mode of convincing my readers, that this once celebrated but now neglected poem deserved the reputation it had once acquired. The spirit likewise of the passage is such as more particularly suits the genius of our times, when the birth-right of Britons, the very life of our noblest institutions, is attacked by the lawless arm of despotism. Enumerating the charms of Italy, the poet exclaims,

But what avail her unexhausted stores,
Her blooming mountains, and her sunny shores,
With all the gifts that heaven and earth impart,
The smiles of nature, and the charms of art,
While proud oppression in her vallies reigns,
And tyranny usurps her happy plains;
The poor inhabitant beholds in vain
The red'ning orange, and the swelling grain:
Joyless he sees the growing oils and wines,
And in the myrtle's fragrant shade repines:
Starves, in the midst of Nature's bounty curst,
And in the loaden vineyard dies for thirst.

Oh Liberty, thou goddess heavenly bright,
Profuse of bliss, and pregnant with delight!
Eternal pleasures in thy presence reign,
And smiling Plenty leads thy wanton train;

Digitized by Google

Eas'd of her load Subjection grows more light,
And Poverty looks cheerful in thy sight;
Thou mak'st the gloomy face of Nature gay,
Giv'st beauty to the sun, and pleasure to the day.

Thee, goddess, thee, Britannia's Isle adores;
How has she oft exhausted all her stores,
How oft in fields of death thy presence sought,
Nor thinks the mighty prize too dearly bought!
On foreign mountains may the sun refine
The grape's soft juice, and mellow it to wine,
With citron groves adorn a distant soil,
And the fat olive swell with floods of oil:
We envy not the warmer clime, that lies
In ten degrees of more indulgent skies,
Nor at the coarseness of our heaven repine,
Though o'er our heads the frozen Pleiads shine?
'Tis Liberty that crowns Britannia's Isle,
And makes her barren rocks and her bleak mountains smile.

The principal defect of this elegant epistle is a want of appropriate dilation, on the admirable productions of the artists of Italy; which, as displayed in their buildings, sculpture, and paintings, form features almost as characteristic of the country as those which nature has bestowed. The eulogium on Raphael is, it must be confessed, cold and spiritless.

It would be wrong to pass over in silence the introduction to this letter, which includes a graceful and most delicately turned compliment on

Digitized by Google

Lord Halifax, and is, at the same time, a pleasing proof of Addison's attention and gratitude, as it was written after his lordship's impeachment in 1701 by the commons in parliament, and when he had retired from all his offices.

Italy soon honoured this epistolary poem by an accurate translation from the pen of the Greek Professor at Florence, the Abbot Antonio Maria Salvini, and which accompanies the original in the quarto edition of our author's works by Mr. Tickell.

During his tour, Addison was not only very assiduous in collecting observations for an intended publication of his travels, but he likewise composed his dialogues on medals, and the major part of his Cato. Had not the death of King William intervened, his residence upon the continent had probably been protracted for some time, as government had selected him as a person properly qualified to attend Prince Eugene, who then acted as general for the Emperor in Italy. The decease of the King, however, both frustrated this design, and, from the discontinuance of his pension, left him in a state of comparative poverty. Swift has asserted, that he was compelled by indigence to become the tutor of a travelling squire; and his appearance, it is said, was such on his return as somewhat to corroborate the report.

Digitized by Google

That Swift was mistaken, however, in this assertion there is every reason to suppose. It is evident, indeed, from a correspondence lately published between Addison and Edward Wortley Montagu, Esq.* that this gentleman, afterwards husband of the accomplished Lady Mary, was the only permanent companion our author possessed during his tour, and that their acquaintance commenced by accident upon the continent. "I shall only assure you," says Addison, concluding one of his letters to his friend, dated Geneva, December 9th, 1701, "that I think Mr. Montagu's acquaintance the luckiest adventure that I could possibly have met with in my travels."

Mr. Montagu, who was at this time in England, had probably first met Addison at Blois; for in a letter, dated by the latter Aux trois Rois a Chateau-dun, July 23d, 1699, he says, "I am now at Chateau-dun, where I shall expect your company, or a letter from you, with some impatience;" and again, at the close of the same epistle, "I shall hope to see you within about a week hence." That Addison and he reached the port of Genoa together, in December, 1700, appears clearly from the letter already transcribed from Geneva, dated December 9th, 1701, where our author observes, that "the sight of a plain is as

* See *Additamenta*, vol. i. Fac-simile letters.

Digitized by Google

agreeable to me at present, as a shore was *about a year ago after our tempest at Genoa.*"

It is very probable therefore, as Mr. Montagu had only just returned to England in December 1701, that nearly two years were spent together by these friends upon the continent: and that Addison entertained the most affectionate regard for Mr. Montagu, a regard, indeed, which lasted unimpaired through life, is apparent from the whole tenor of their letters.

Addison, it is true, remained abroad more than a twelvemonth after the return of Mr. Montagu; but this delay was avowedly under the expectation of being employed by government; and had he previously officiated as a tutor, it is hardly possible to suppose but that some hint relative to his pupil would have escaped either Mr. Montagu or himself.

Of the letters which Addison wrote during his residence upon the continent, but few are preserved. The following, of which the original is in the Bodleian Library at Oxford, I have copied, for its intrinsic merit, from the Anecdotes by Mr. Seward:

DEAR SIR,

I HOPE this will find you safe at Geneva; and that the adventure of the Rivulet, which you

Digitized by Google

have so well celebrated in your last, has been the worst you have met with in your journey thither. I can't but envy your being among the Alps, where you may see frost and snow in the dog-days: we are here quite burnt up, and are at least ten degrees nearer the sun than when you left us. I am very well satisfied 'twas in August that Virgil wrote his "*O quis me gelidis sub montibus Hæmi*," &c. Our days at present, like those in the first chapter of Genesis, consist only of the evening and the morning; for the Roman noons are as silent as the midnights at other countries. But among all these inconveniencies, the greatest I suffer is from your departure, which is more afflicting to me than the canicule. I am forced, for want of better company, to converse mostly with pictures, statues, and medals: for you must know I deal very much in ancient coins, and can count out a sum in sesterces with as much ease as in pounds sterling. I am a great critic in rust, and can tell you the age of it at first sight: I am only in some danger of losing my acquaintance with our English money; for at present I am much more used to the Roman. If you glean up any of our country news, be so kind as to forward it this way. Pray give Mr. Dashwood and my

Digitized by Google

very humble service to Sir Thomas; and accept of the same yourself from,

DEAR SIR,

Your most affectionate
humble servant,

J. ADDISON.

"August 7th.

"My Lord Bernard, &c. give their H. service." *

Addison published his travels soon after he returned to this country in 1702, and dedicated them to his patron Lord Somers. They are written on a plan entirely his own, illustrative of classical costume and description, and may be considered, according to the observation of Tickell, as an extensive commentary on his epistle to Lord Halifax. For thus deviating from the common course, he has judiciously accounted in his preface. Burnet, Lassels, Ray, and Misson, he observes, had preceded him in describing Italy. The first had principally dwelt on religion and government; the second had given a copious catalogue of the writers on each state; the third attached himself

* Anecdotes of Some Distinguished Persons, Vol. ii. p. 231, 4th edit. 1798. To whom this letter was addressed, or what connection subsisted between Mr. Dashwood and our author, is not even hinted by Mr. Seward.

Digitized by Google

chiefly to the natural history of the country, and the fourth had excelled in its geography. To him therefore remained the flowery and untrodden path of classical illustration.

The style of these travels is easy, yet elegant; the quotations, which are usually brought forward to contrast the present appearance of the country with its former state, are numerous and pertinent; and the observations which he has intermingled, and particularly his sentiments on liberty, and his description of the little republic of San Marino, are at once interesting and instructive. The book, however, from the novelty of the design, was at first not much understood or relished; it was not calculated for the mass of general readers; and those who were competent to appreciate its merits were slow in disclosing their opinion. Time, at length, ascertained its value; and before a second edition reached the press, it had risen to five times the original price.*

* I have lately had the pleasure of perusing some manuscript travels in Italy, written upon the plan of Addison, by the late Francis Drake, D.D. They were composed so far back as the year 1750; but embrace a much wider field of illustration, and exhibit a more abundant harvest of classical quotation, than their celebrated predecessor. The style is familiar, but perspicuous; and each scene or object appears to have been viewed with intelligent assiduity, and with a warm attachment to the study of Roman antiquity. They

Digitized by Google

The change of administration which had taken place in the year 1702 left Addison, from the dismissal of his friends, very slender hopes of employment or reward. He had passed more than two years in the shades of retirement, when the military glories of his country became the fortunate means of once more bringing him before the public view. The battle of Blenheim demanded a poet worthy of the subject; and as none had arisen at all competent to the task, the Lord Treasurer Godolphin, solicitous that the exploits of Marlborough should not pass without due celebration, requested Lord Halifax, who he knew was desirous of being esteemed the patron of literature, and especially of the poets, to recommend him a bard whose powers might immortalize the hero.

Halifax declared, such was his regret and indignation at every day witnessing the public property lavished on men without parts or genius, while modest merit was condemned to perish

would form a handsome volume in quarto; and if it be considered that travels of this nature are, in fact, rendered more valuable by the lapse of time, and the devastations of conquest, their publication at the present period may probably not be deemed altogether useless, or ill-timed. I have written this note with a view of enquiring how far such a work may be thought acceptable in the literary world.

Digitized by Google

unregarded, that, though he well knew a person whose abilities were adequate to the attempt, he was yet unwilling to reveal his name. Godolphin expressed his sorrow that occasion should have been given for the censure, which in future he would take care should not apply; and added, he would pledge his honour that whoever his Lordship might propose, should not fail to meet a reward in every respect adequate to his merit and expectations. Upon this declaration Lord Halifax named Addison; but at the same time desired that the Treasurer would himself send to him; a request which he immediately complied with, by prevailing upon Mr. Boyle, then Chancellor of the Exchequer, to wait upon Mr. Addison in his name; a visit which, from the address and obliging manner of the person who paid it, soon terminated in acquiescence on the part of our author. Ample remuneration speedily followed; for Addison having finished the celebrated simile of the Angel, and being anxious for Godolphin's opinion, sent him the poem when thus far advanced, and the Treasurer expressed his high sense of its excellence by constituting the poet a Commissioner of Appeals, an office of considerable emolument, and in which he immediately succeeded the ingenious Mr. Locke.

The Campaign, which Dr. Warton has, perhaps

Digitized by Google

with too much severity, censured as "a Gazette in Rhyme," acquired for its author very general and distinguished applause. Of various writers, among whom were Phillips and Eusden, who tried their talents on this popular subject, none approached, by many degrees, the acknowledged merit of Addison; and though the Campaign has lately suffered much in the estimation of modern criticism, it will still, to a mind unbiassed by opinion, afford no inconsiderable portion of interest and pleasure.

What more than any other cause has contributed to sink its reputation, is the want of unity in the conduct and design, a defalcation which no work, either in prose or verse, can long expect to survive. If, instead of relating the military transactions of one campaign, the author had confined himself solely to the great victory at Blenheim, and, by rendering every thing subservient to this important action, had, to use the artist's phrase, given it more relief, the effect had been striking and impressive, and the poem had lived in the memory of its readers. It is now, as an elegant critic hath but too justly observed, little more than the detail of a regular march, which the poet has observed from one town to another, as if he had been a commissary of the army.

Digitized by Google

Yet this detail he has enriched with much art and judgment. The character of Marlborough is well sustained; and the simile of the Angel, which has at one time been so lavishly praised, and at another so idly and unmercifully torn to pieces,* is, if not entitled to the extravagant encomium of the Tatler,† at least a magnificent and pleasing illustration.

There are many passages, however, in the poem which, in my opinion, if truth and nature be consulted, greatly exceed these far-famed lines. In describing the progress of the army, the poet has interwoven several descriptions which strongly paint the passions, and has intermingled many sentiments which excite our sympathy. Of these I shall select three or four specimens; and few, I imagine, will hesitate to acknowledge them worthy of the finest genius.

O'er prostrate towns and palaces they pass
(Now cover'd o'er with weeds, and hid in grass,
Breathing revenge; whilst anger and disdain
Fire every breast, and boil in every vein.
The western sun now shot a feeble ray,
And faintly scatter'd the remains of day,

* Vide Cooper's Letters on Taste, and Johnson's Lives of the Poets.

† The Tatler calls it one of the noblest thoughts that ever entered the heart of man; whilst Dr. Madden declares, that if he had set ten school-boys to write on the battle of Blenheim, and eight had brought him the Angel, he should not have been surprised.

Digitized by Google

Ev'ning approach'd; but, oh! what hosts of foes
Were never to behold that ev'ning close!

Behold in awful march and dread array
The long extended squadrons shape their way!
Death, in approaching terrible, imparts
An anxious horror to the bravest hearts;
Yet do their beating breasts demand the strife,
And thirst of glory quells the love of life.

O *Dormer*, how can I behold thy fate,
And not the wonders of thy youth relate!
How can I see the gay, the brave, the young,
Fall in the cloud of war, and lie unsung!
In joys of conquest he resigns his breath,
And, fill'd with *England*'s glory, smiles in death.

The reputation which Addison had now acquired, speedily introduced him to more public employments. In 1705 he accompanied Lord Halifax to Hanover; and before another year had elapsed, he was appointed Under-Secretary of State to Sir Charles Hedges, and again to the Earl of Sunderland, who succeeded Sir Charles in December, 1706.

It was during this period that our author produced his *Rosamond*, one of the most pleasing of his compositions, and which was intended to supersede the Italian opera; the rage for which entertainment had become so general, although it abounded in every species of nonsense and absurdity, and was written in a language very little

Digitized by Google

understood, that the works of our best dramatic writers, of Shakspeare, of Congreve, and of Otway, were in danger of being abandoned, for mere sweetness of sound, for the worthless and insipid dialogue of these puerile productions.

The state of the Italian opera in England at the commencement of the 18th century was widely different from that which it has since attained. Though the music might be scientific, the poetry was intolerable. No Metastasio had then arisen to connect sense with sound; and the translations which were attempted from the Italian of these pieces, were, if possible, worse than the originals; for the words being necessarily transposed in the version, the utmost dissonance prevailed between the meaning of the composer and the poet. Often, says Addison, "the soft notes that were adapted to the word *pity* in the Italian, fell upon the word *rage* in the English; and the angry sounds that were turned to *rage* in the original, were made to express *pity* in the translation. It oftentimes happened, likewise, that the finest notes in the air fell upon the most insignificant words in the sentence. I have known the word 'and' pursued through the whole gamut, have been entertained with many a melodious 'the,' and have heard the most beautiful graces, quavers, and

Digitized by Google

divisions bestowed upon 'then, for, and from;' to the eternal honour of our English particles." *

To banish these disgraceful dramas from the stage, and to ascertain whether it were possible to unite in a composition of this kind the beauties of poetic genius with the fascinations of harmony, Mr. Addison was solicited by the friends of good sense and taste to write an opera; a request which he soon complied with by the production of Rosamond.

The expected effect, however, did not follow; Rosamond was, if not hissed, neglected, and the lovers of the Italian opera obtained a triumph. The cause of this want of success must be sought for, not in the piece itself, but in the accompanying music, which proving greatly inferior to what the audience had been accustomed to, rendered all the beauties of the poem unavailing.† Had the composer done his duty, it must have excited no common interest; for the versification is peculiarly sweet, the fable and incidents well managed, and the denouement satisfactory and pleasing.

The only blemish that criticism can bring forward, has arisen from the ludicrous characters

* Spectator, No. 18.

† See Hawkins's History of Music, vol. v. p. 157.

Digitized by Google

of Sir Trusty and Grideline; the former especially, even in the most pathetic scenes, descending to burlesque and farce, the consequence of which must necessarily be a diminution of effect; for the intermixture of emotions so opposed as are those of laughter and pity can only be productive of mutual injury.

Though unsuccessful on the stage, where trick and management are frequently of more avail than all the efforts of genius, our author, sensible that it deserved a better fate, very properly placed it before another tribunal. It was published, inscribed to the Duchess of Marlborough, and has ever since held no mean rank in the estimation of its readers.

The story on which this drama is founded was apparently well calculated to render it acceptable. None has been more popular among all classes; the theme of our minstrels and historians from an early period, it has been associated with our most permanent recollections, with those emotions which in the morning of life paint vividly on the mind and heart the interesting pictures of distress and sorrow. This impression, however, of deep pathos and melancholy, was perhaps rather unfavourable to the opera of Addison, whose characteristic is a light and airy elegance, and of which the catastrophe is not

Digitized by Google

accordant with the detail of legendary narrative. The old ballad, as preserved in the Pepysian library, is altogether of a tragic cast; and those most familiar with romantic fiction would consequently feel some disappointment at the comic style of many portions of the dialogue, and at the mitigated terrors of its more serious parts.*

To Rosamond are prefixed some very elegant encomiastic verses by Tickell, which, as they procured him the friendship of Addison, proved the source of his future prosperity. The following lines are singularly happy, and have been honoured by the imitation of Pope:

Let joy salute fair *Rosamonda's* shade,
And wreaths of myrtle crown the lovely maid,
While now perhaps with Dido's ghost she roves,
And hears and tells the story of their loves:
Alike they mourn, alike they bless their fate,
Since love, which made 'em wretched, makes 'em great.
Nor longer that relentless doom bemoan,
Which gain'd a *Virgil* and an *Addison*.
Unrivall'd as thy merit be thy fame,
And thy own laurels shade thy envied name—
Thy name the boast of all the tuneful choir,
Shall tremble on the strings of every lyre,
While the charm'd reader with thy thought complies,
Feels corresponding joys or sorrows rise,
And views thy *Rosamond* with *Henry's* eyes.

* There are many fine strokes of description in this old ballad, mixed, as usual in compositions of this kind, with a considerable

Owing to the warm friendship which subsisted between Steele and Addison, the latter had contributed several scenes to the "Tender Husband," one of Sir Richard's best comedies, and which was published at this period. The assistance that he derived from Addison he very handsomely acknowledges in a well written dedication to him, and which, observes the Biographia Britannica, may be considered as one of the few monuments of praise not unworthy of him to whose honour it was erected. The humorous prologue to this play is likewise, as hath been mentioned in the life of Steele, the production of our author.

The literary occupations of Mr. Addison now suffered a temporary suspension; for the Marquis of Wharton, father of the eccentric Duke immortalized by the satire of Pope, being appointed Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, went thither in 1709,

portion of bald and puerile matter. The following lines represent the charms of Rosamond in glowing colours:

Her crisped locks like threads of golde
Appear'd to each man's sight;
Her sparkling eyes, like orient pearls,
Did cast a heavenlye light.

The blood within her crystal cheekes
Did such a colour drive,
As though the lillye and the rose
For mastership did strive.

Digitized by Google

taking with him Mr. Addison as his Secretary, a situation in which he obtained much reputation for his assiduity and unblemished integrity. Nor was this the only official rank that he held in Ireland; for, through the recommendation of the Duchess of Marlborough, the Queen, who had long admired the character and abilities of Mr. Addison, presented him with the place of Keeper of the Records in that kingdom; and, as a proof of her peculiar favour, augmented its salary from a very trifling sum to an income of three hundred pounds a year. Of his conduct in this office, Swift has recorded a circumstance which evinces his judgment and prudent resolution. He had resolved, he observes, never to remit his regular fees in civility to his friends. "I may," said he, "have a hundred friends; and if my fee be two guineas, I shall, by relinquishing my right, lose two hundred guineas, and no friend gain more than the two. The evil suffered, therefore, beyond all proportion exceeds the benefit done."

He was, at the same time, equally resolute and consistent in refusing any addition or douceur; and the following letter addressed to Major Dunbar, who wished to compliment him with a bank note of 300*l.* is a striking proof of his independance and integrity.

Digitized by Google

SIR,

I FIND there is a very strong opposition formed against you; but I shall wait on my Lord Lieutenant this morning, and lay your case before him as advantageously as I can, if he is not engaged in other company. I am afraid what you say of his Grace does not portend you any good.

And now, Sir, believe me when I assure you, I never did, nor ever will, on any pretence whatsoever, take more than the stated and customary fees of my office. I might keep the contrary practice concealed from the world, were I capable of it, but I could not from myself; and I hope I shall always fear the reproaches of my own heart more than those of all mankind. In the mean time, if I can serve a gentleman of merit, and such a character as you bear in the world, the satisfaction I meet with on such an occasion is always a sufficient, and the only reward to,

SIR,

Your most obedient
humble servant,

J. ADDISON.

The friendship which subsisted between Dr. Swift and Addison appears to have been fully formed at the period when the latter first visited

Digitized by Google

Ireland. Of this, three short letters from Dublin to the Doctor, dated in 1709, afford abundant proof.

TO DR. SWIFT.

DEAR SIR, Dublin, April 22, 1709.

I AM in a very great hurry of business, but cannot forbear thanking you for your letter at Chester, which was the only entertainment I met with in that place. I hope to see you very suddenly, and will wait on our friend the Bishop of Clogher,* as soon as I can possibly. I have had just time to tell him, *en passant*, that you were well. I long to see you; and am, dear Sir, your most faithful, and most obedient servant,

J. ADDISON.

We arrived yesterday at Dublin.

TO DR. SWIFT.

DEAR SIR, Dublin Castle, June 25, 1709.

I AM heartily glad to hear you are so near us. If you will deliver the enclosed to the captain of the Wolf, I dare say he will accommodate you with all in his power, If he has left Chester, I have sent you a bill according to the Bishop of Clogher's desire, of whom I have a thousand good things to say. I do not ask your excuse about

* Dr. St. George Ashe.

Digitized by Google

the yacht, because I don't want it, as you shall hear at Dublin: if I did, I should think myself inexcusable. I long to talk over all affairs with you; and am ever, dear Sir, yours most entirely,

J. ADDISON.

P. S. The yacht will come over with the acts of parliament and a convoy about a week hence, which opportunity you may lay hold of, if you do not like the Wolf. I will give orders accordingly.

TO DR. SWIFT.

DEAR SIR, Nine o'clock, Monday morning.

I THINK it very hard I should be in the same kingdom with Dr. Swift, and not have the happiness of his company once in three days. The Bishop of Clogher intends to call on you this morning, as will your humble servant in my return from Chapel Izzard, whither I am just now going.

Your humble servant,

J. ADDISON.

In the spring of the year 1710, our author, who was then in England, but preparing for his second summer excursion to Dublin, writes thus to his friend.

Digitized by Google

TO DR. SWIFT.

DEAR SIR, St. James's Palace, April 11, 1710.

I HAVE run so much in debt with you, that I do not know how to excuse myself, and therefore shall throw myself wholly upon your good nature; and promise, if you will pardon what is passed, to be more punctual with you for the future. I hope to have the happiness of waiting on you very suddenly at Dublin, and do not at all regret the leaving of England, while I am going to a place, where I shall have the satisfaction and honour of Dr. Swift's conversation. I shall not trouble you with any occurrences here, because I hope to have the pleasure of talking over all affairs with you very suddenly. We hope to be at Holyhead by the 30th instant. Lady Wharton stays in England. I suppose you know that I obeyed your's, and the Bishop of Clogher's commands, in relation to Mr. Smith; for I desired Mrs. Dawson to acquaint you with it. I must beg my most humble duty to the Bishop of Clogher. I heartily long to eat a dish of bacon and beans in the best company in the world. Mr. Steele and I often drink your health.

I am forced to give myself airs of a punctual correspondence with you in discourse with your

friends at St. James's coffee-house, who are always asking me questions about you, when they have a mind to pay their court to me, if I may use so magnificent a phrase. Pray, dear doctor, continue your friendship toward me, who love, and esteem you, if possible, as much as you deserve. I am ever, dear Sir, your's entirely,

J. ADDISON.

During this second residence in Ireland, there are two letters extant from Addison to the Doctor; the first of which breathes the most ardent friendship and admiration, and appears to have been written from the heart. The second is in a great measure confined to business.

DEAR SIR, Dublin, June 3, 1710.

I AM just now come from Finglass, where I have been drinking your health, and talking of you, with one who loves and admires you better than any man in the world, except your humble servant. We both agree in a request, that you will set out for Dublin as soon as possible. To tell you truly, I find the place disagreeable, and cannot imagine why it should appear so now more than it did last year. You know I look upon every thing that is like a compliment as a breach of friendship; and therefore shall only tell you,

Digitized by Google

that I long to see you; without assuring you, that I love your company and value your conversation more than any man's, or that I am, with the most inviolable sincerity and esteem,

DEAR SIR,
Your most faithful,
most humble, and
most obedient servant,
J. ADDISON.

DEAR SIR, Dublin Castle, July 23, 1710.

ABOUT two days ago I received the enclosed, that is sealed up, and yesterday that of my friend Steele, which, requiring a speedy answer, I have sent you express. In the mean time I have let him know, that you are not out of town, and that he may expect your answer by the next post. I fancy he had my Lord Halifax's authority for writing. I hope this will bring you to town. For your amusement by the way, I have sent you some of this day's news; to which I must add, that Drs. Bysse and Robinson are likely to be the Bishops of Bristol and St. David's: that our politicians are startled at the breaking off the negociations, and fall of stocks; insomuch that it is thought they will not venture at dissolving the parliament in such a crisis. I am ever, dear Sir, your's entirely, J. ADDISON.

Digitized by Google

Mr. Steele desires me to seal your's before I deliver it; but this you will excuse in one, who wishes you as well as he, or any body living can do.

It was during our author's residence in Ireland that Steele commenced the publication of his Tatler. This was done, as hath already been observed, without the knowledge of his friend; but the following passage in the sixth number, by communicating a critical remark which Addison had alone imparted to Sir Richard, immediately revealed the writer.

"Virgil's common epithet to Æneas is *Pius* or *Pater*. I have therefore considered," says he, "what passage there is in any of his hero's actions where either of these appellations would have been most improper;—and this, I think, is his meeting with Dido in the cave, where *Pius* Æneas would have been absurd, and *Pater* Æneas a burlesque: the poet therefore wisely dropped them both for Dux Trojanus; which he has repeated twice in Juno's speech, and his own narration: for he very well knew, a loose action might be consistent enough with the usual manners of a soldier, though it became neither the chastity of a pious man, nor the gravity of the father of a people."

To the introduction of this morsel of criticism therefore, we probably owe a great portion of the

Digitized by Google

entertainment afforded us by the Tatler; for the consequence of the discovery to which it immediately led, was Addison's participation in the conduct of the work; and all who have read his exquisitely humorous papers in this production must instantly perceive the value of his communications. These at first were not frequent, but when the change of ministry deprived him of his employment, and he returned with Lord Wharton to England in September, 1709, he became a more assiduous contributor.

It has been too much the fashion to depreciate the *Tatler*, and to contrast it with its more elaborate and finished successor the *Spectator*. The attempt, however, is not just; they are built upon very different plans; and if it be allowed, as it probably must upon comparison, that there is more unity, regularity, and polish in the conduct and plan of the Spectator, it may, I think, with equal truth be asserted of the Tatler, that it possesses more vivacity, wit, and variety, than any periodical paper extant. Of the Essays of Addison in this first example of periodical composition, it has been justly observed by the writer of his life in the Biographia Britannica, that "it is impossible to be serious, while we read such of them as are humorous; or not to be grave on the perusal of such as are of an opposite cast. The

Digitized by Google

images are so striking, the language so graceful, the turn so natural, the raillery so lively, and at the same time so innocent, that not to be charmed with these pieces, and to be absolutely without taste, must be for ever synonymous terms." *

As the papers of Addison, in the Tatler were not distinguished by any appropriate signature, he had directed Mr. Tickell, to whom, not many days before his death, he had committed the charge of republishing his works collectively, to obtain the necessary information from Sir Richard Steele, who not only pointed out those which were entirely of his friend's composition, but those likewise which were the product of their united exertions.

The *Tatler*, may very properly be considered as the first paper which offered any legitimate model of periodical composition; an attempt which the *Spectator* as a succeeding effort carried to a degree of perfection not yet rivalled.

The project of writing another paper on the close of the Tatler originated with Sir Richard Steele; but the plan upon which such a work should be conducted was the result of much consideration between the two friends; and it is highly probable, that the scheme and opinion of Addison, to whom Steele had ever been accus-

* Biographia Britannica, vol. i. p. 49. Note.

Digitized by Google

tomed to pay great deference, exclusively operated in moulding what may be termed the fable and outline of the Spectator.

The introduction of a club into this paper, whose characters, taken from the principal classes of society and consistently supported, dramatize as it were the whole series of essays, was a contrivance admirably calculated to afford the requisite degree of unity. The character of the SPECTATOR is never lost sight of; it is insinuated through the entire production, and renders it, in fact, a complete picture of the mind of an individual. By this mean a very considerable portion of interest and curiosity is excited; we entertain an affection for the writer who has thus given us such a masterly portrait of himself, and we perceive with delight that through the medium of this minute delineation of his person and manners, and those of his associates, he has formed a common centre of attraction, round which the whole work turns with a correspondence and beauty of design which have for ever established it as the best model of the periodical essay.

Many succeeding Essayists have approximated very closely to some of the acknowledged excellencies of Addison. Morality, imagery, wit, and taste are diffused with no sparing hand over their

Digitized by Google

pages; but in the spirit and unity of their plan they have altogether failed, or fallen infinitely short of their celebrated prototype.

The artful and finished construction, indeed, of the design on which the *Spectator* is founded, is such, that the most perfect rules may be drawn from it for the regulation of this species of composition; and it is to be regretted that it has not more frequently met with liberal imitation from our numerous periodical writers. It must be obvious, that a mere series of detached essays without any dependency of parts, without any organization which can constitute them a whole, can never make the impression, nor excite the lively interest which the well-arranged scheme of Addison so completely effects.

It is in the *Spectator* that the genius of our author beams with unclouded lustre. The essays most valuable for their humour, invention, and precept, are the product of his pen; and it soon became, in consequence of his large contributions, the most popular work this country has produced. So great was its reputation, that sometimes twenty thousand copies of a number were sold in one day.* Nor was its circulation restricted to the metropolis and its immediate neighbourhood; it travelled through every district

* Biographia Britannica, vol. i. p. 49.

Digitized by Google

of the kingdom, and was alike the recreation of the learned, the busy, and the idle.

"Rare as the intercourse was," says Dr. Bisset, "between the capital and the Highlands of Scotland, yet did the Spectator find its way regularly to that part of the kingdom. Mr. Stewart of Dalguise, a gentleman of Perthshire, of very great respectability, who died, near ninety, about twelve or fourteen years ago, has informed us, that when, as usual in that country, the gentlemen met after church on Sunday, to discuss the news of the week, the Spectators were read as regularly as the Journal. He informed us also, that he knew the perusal of them to be general through the country."*

Its acceptance on the continent was not less flattering than that which it had received in these islands. The author of the Dissertation sur la Poesie Angloise, in the Journal Literarie, speaking of this work, remarks, "the finest geniuses in England have exerted in the Spectator all the force of their reflections, all the delicacy of style, and all the fire of imagination that can be conceived. It is an admirable work, and it has preserved a great part of its original graces and beauty in the French translation. There is such a prodigious variety in it, both with regard to

* Bisset's Life of Addison, p. 36.

Digitized by Google

the style and the subjects which it treats of, that we justly affirm, the French nation has nothing to oppose to this work, that can be considered equal to it.*

Mr. Addison's papers in the Spectator are designated by the letters of the word CLIO in the following succession, 1. C, 2. L, 3. I, 4. O; "of the real meaning of them," says Mr. Nichols, "probably no unexceptionable explication can now be given; but it is not very credible, that Addison adopted these letters, and placed them in this order, merely because the combination of them made up the name of the Muse Clio.†

The conjecture of Mr. Nichols is, that these letters are the initials of the places whence the papers were written and dated, and may be considered, with some probability, as denoting *Chelsea, London, Islington*, and his *office;* a supposition, however, which wants confirmation.

Tickell has insinuated in his preface to the quarto edition, that Addison marked his papers to remove the least possibility, even in the most undiscerning reader, of mistaking his productions; an observation which justly offending Sir Richard Steele, he thus expresses his resentment and refutes the idea, in the dedication of the

* Tom. ix. p. 159, 160.

† Spectator, vol. i. p. 44. Note—edit. 1797.

Digitized by Google

Drummer. "The editor will not let me, or any one else, obey Mr. Addison's commands, in hiding any thing he desired should be concealed. I cannot but take further notice, that the circumstance of marking his Spectators, which I did not know until I had done with the work, *I made my own act*, because I thought it too great a sensibility in my friend; and thought since it was done, better to be supposed marked by me, than the author himself; the real state of which, this zealot rashly and injudiciously exposes. I ask the reader whether any thing but an earnestness to disparage me, could provoke the editor, in behalf of Mr. Addison, to say that he marked it out of caution against me, when I had taken upon me to say, it was I that did it out of tenderness to him." *

The *seventh* volume of the Spectator closed on December 6th, 1712, and, after an interval of about a year and a half the *eighth* commenced, and terminated December 20th, 1714. Little more than a fortnight had elapsed from this latter date, when, on January the 3d, 1715, appeared the first number of a paper under the title of the *ninth* volume of the Spectator, conducted, with the assistance of a few friends, by a *Mr. William Bond*. The attempt, though it lingered to the

* Dedication of the Drummer, p. 11.

Digitized by Google

sixty-first number, did not succeed. A volume, however, was formed, which few of my readers probably have ever seen or even heard of, and which was dedicated to the Vicountess of Falconberg. In this dedication occurs the following passage: "I had not enlarged so much upon the subject of wit," says the author, "at the same time that I own myself so little a master of it, if I had not in some little measure been provoked to it, by an *Advertisement* put out against me by the ingenious gentlemen who published the *former Spectators;* in which they are pleased to say, that *it was needless to inform the public, that none of the Authors who contributed their Quotas to the former volumes, had any thing to do with this.*"* The information, if such it can be called, was, without doubt, perfectly needless; for almost every page, both in matter and style, stamps this supplementary volume as the production of writers who hold no competition with their illustrious predecessors. I may venture, indeed, to assert, that there is not to be found in the whole collection, one particle of Addisonian sweetness or grace.

The following letter by Addison, as it relates to the Spectator, and refers to our author's loss of property and of official employment in the

* Dedication, p. 10, and 11.

Digitized by Google

year 1711, I shall insert in this place. It is addressed to Edward Wortley Montagu Esq. who was then a member of the House of Commons.

DEAR SIR, July 21st, 1711.

BEING very well pleased with this day's Spectator, I cannot forbear sending you one of them, and desiring your opinion of the story in it. When you have a son I shall be glad to be his Leontine,* as my circumstances will probably be like his. I have within this twelvemonth lost a place of 2000*l.* per annum, an estate in the Indies of 14,000*l.* and, what is more than all the rest, my mistress. Hear this, and wonder at my philosophy. I find they are going to take away my Irish place from me too; to which I must add, that I have just resigned my fellowship, and the stocks sink every day. If you have any hints or subjects, pray send me a paper full. I long to talk an evening with you. I believe I shall not go for Ireland this summer, and perhaps would take a month with you, if I knew where. Lady Bellasise is very much your humble servant. Dick Steele and I often remember you.

I am, DEAR SIR,
Your's eternally, &c.
J. ADDISON.†

* Spectator, No. 123.

† Vide Addisoniana, vol. i. Fac-simile Letter, No. 6.

Digitized by Google

Notwithstanding these heavy losses, Addison contrived this very year to purchase a pretty large house and estate at Bilton in Warwickshire, of which Mr. Ireland has lately in his work entitled, "Picturesque views on the River Avon," published the following very interesting description:

"Quitting Rugby," he remarks, "we pass a handsome modern bridge of three circular arches, constructed of stone, thrown across the Avon at about half a mile distant from the town. The river from hence winds gently through a fertile and expanded valley, till we reach the village of Newbold; which, from its eminent situation, commands a beautiful and extensive prospect on every side. The canal is conducted through a subterraneous passage beneath part of the church-yard of Newbold, and from this point highly increases the beauty of the surrounding scene, which includes an extended view of the meandering course of our gentle Avon, through a verdant space of fertile vallies. The spire of the church in the distance of the landscape belongs to the village of Bilton, which may well be considered as classical ground, having been the residence of Mr. Addison; a name that will ever be held in esteem by the admirer of sound criticism, chaste humour, and a correct and attic

style of composition. Veneration for the character of this eminent man leads me to view the situation of his retreat, which stands about a mile distant from the banks of the Avon.—

"The exterior of this house, though it cannot be truly denominated picturesque, may yet have a claim to attention, as it remains precisely in the state it was at the decease of its former possessor, nor has the interior suffered much change in its former decoration. The furniture and pictures hold their places with an apparent sacred attention to his memory. Among the latter are three of himself, at different periods of his life, in each of which is strongly marked with the pencil, the ease of the gentleman, and the open and ingenuous character of the friend to humanity. Two good portraits are likewise hanging near his own, of his friend Mr. Secretary Craggs.

"Some others of Vandyck, Van Somers, Lely, &c. that were purchased by Mr. Addison, are to be found in other apartments, sufficient to evince that his taste was not confined to writing alone. In the grounds, a long walk of beautiful Spanish chesnuts and oaks, running in a strait line, still hold their primitive appearance; here he was accustomed to pass the hours in that musing, and in those reflections, from which the public have

Digitized by Google

gathered so rich a fruit: it retains the name of Addison's Walk. This form of a strait line is that to which, in his earliest youth, he seems to have been attached; as part of the walks in Magdalen College, which are fashioned upon this model, still pass there under his name.

"The Spanish oaks in these grounds are said to have been the first that were planted in this country; the acorns were given to him by his friend Craggs, who brought them from Spain.

"In a kind of hermitage in this walk, I found the following verses:

'Sequester'd from the world, oh! let me dwell
With Contemplation in this lonely cell;
By mortal eye unseen, I will explore
The various works of nature's bounteous store;
Revisit oft each flower, whose blossom fair
With fragrant sweets perfumes the ambient air;
Pry into every shrub, and mark its way
From birth to growth, from growth to sure decay:
Or else with humble thoughts my eyes I'll bend,
And view the near resemblance of my end;
Then think of death, and of eternal days,
Learn how to die, my Maker how to praise,
All ways despise that draw my mind from this,
Then strive to gain an endless age of bliss.'

"I do not know that these lines were Mr. Addison's, but there is something in their versification that renders them not unworthy a recital.

Digitized by Google

This estate was purchased by Mr. Addison in the year 1711, of the younger son of Sir William Broughton, for the sum of 10,000*l.*; in the purchase he was assisted by his brother, Mr. Gulstone Addison, governor of Fort St. George at Madras, in which station he succeeded Governor Pitt, distinguished by the appellation of Diamond Pitt.

"At the decease of Mr. Addison, in 1719, this estate came to his widow, the Countess of Warwick, from whom it devolved on their daughter, the present Mrs. Addison, whom I had the honour of seeing, at this visit, with no small degree of respect and veneration. This lady was born about a twelvemonth before the death of her father, who, as some vague reports in the country say, left a large trunk of manuscripts, with a strict injunction that they should not be opened till her decease; if this be true, the polite and learned may, at a future day, expect what may yet further magnify the revered name of Addison."

Since this was written the death of Mrs. Addison has taken place; but, unfortunately, unaccompanied by any thing in the smallest degree tending to confirm these reports.

In the interval between the last two volumes of the Spectator, and in the year 1713, appeared

Digitized by Google

the celebrated Tragedy of CATO, a production on which the *poetical* pretensions of Mr. Addison have been principally founded. It had early been the subject of his thoughts, and four acts are supposed to have been written during his travels upon the continent. These he retouched and improved at his leisure, though without any view to its exhibition on a public theatre. The opinion of his friends, indeed, coincided with his own, and it was justly deemed better calculated for the closet than the stage.

Dr. Young, in his Conjectures on Original Composition, has related, that long before this period, when Addison was even a student at Oxford, he sent up this play, or a part of it, to his friend Dryden, as the person best calculated to introduce it on the stage, provided it merited his recommendation. Dryden, it is said, expressed a high sense of its excellence as a poem; but declared it to be his opinion, that on the stage it would not meet with success.

The spirit of party, however, which now raged with uncommon fury, soon negatived the decision of his friends. The *Tories* were represented as undermining the Constitution in favour of despotic power; and the *Whigs*, professing the utmost alarm at the influence and ambition of the ministry, importuned Mr. Addison to finish and

Digitized by Google

bring forward his Cato, assuring him that such a drama could not fail, at that critical period, from its energy and weight of sentiment, of essentially serving the cause of liberty and his country.

Addison, nevertheless, though a staunch friend to Whig principles, and apprehensive of the projects of Administration, seemed reluctant to complete his long-neglected labour, and actually applied to Mr. Hughes to annex a fifth act to what he had so successfully began. Hughes willingly acquiesced, and had in fact finished some scenes, when Addison, awakened from his inactivity, resumed himself the task, and happily completed the design.

To promote its success upon the stage was now the serious employment of the party. Some preparatory criticism was introduced in the Spectator; Pope contributed a sublime prologue,* Garth an humorous epilogue, and Steele undertook to pack an audience. Notwithstanding this powerful assistance, and the ardent zeal of his political friends, Addison felt diffident and uneasy; and as the night which was to seal its fate

* In this prologue Pope had originally written, "Britons, arise! be worth like this approved;" but Addison, apprehensive that the expression might be thought too strong, and even construed into a wish to excite insurrection, requested that Pope would soften it into "Britons, attend."

Digitized by Google

approached, his anxiety and timidity increased. During the representation he was so agitated between hope and fear, that while he remained retired in the green-room, he kept a person continually going backwards and forwards, from the stage to the place where he was, to inform him how it succeeded; and till the whole was over, and the success confirmed, he never ventured to move.*

Its reception compensated the sufferings of the author; and a successive representation of five-and-thirty nights was an unprecedented proof of the admiration of the public. "The fact was," says Cibber, "that on our first day of acting it, our house was, in a manner, invested, and entrance demanded by twelve o'clock at noon; and before one it was not wide enough for many, who came too late for their places. The same crowds continued for three days together, an uncommon curiosity in that place; and the *death of Cato* triumphed over the *injuries of Cæsar* every where."†

"As to poetical affairs," observes Pope in a letter to Sir William Trumbull, dated April 30th, 1713, "I am content at present to be a bare looker-on, and from a practitioner turn an ad-

* Vide Cibber's Lives of the Poets, vol. iii. p. 313.

† Vide Cibber's Apology.

Digitized by Google

mirer; which, as the world goes, is not very usual. Cato was not so much the wonder of Rome in his days, as he is of Britain in ours; and though all the foolish industry possible had been used to make it thought a party play, yet what the author once said of another, may the most properly in the world be applied to him on this occasion:

> 'Envy itself is dumb, in wonder lost,
> And factions strive who shall applaud him most.'

"The numerous and violent claps of the Whig party on the one side of the theatre, were echoed back by the Tories on the other; while the author sweated behind the scenes, with concern to find their applause proceeding more from the hand than the head. This was the case too with the Prologue-writer, who was clapped into a staunch whig at the end of every two lines. I believe you have heard, that, after all the applauses of the opposite faction, my Lord Bolingbroke sent for Booth, who played Cato, into the box, between one of the acts, and presented him with fifty guineas, in acknowledgement, as he expressed it, for defending the cause of liberty so well against a perpetual dictator. The Whigs are unwilling to be distanced this way, and therefore design a present to the same Cato very

Digitized by Google

speedily; in the mean time, they are getting ready as good a sentence as the former on their side; so betwixt them it is probable, that Cato (as Dr. Garth expressed it) may have something to live upon after he dies."*

The Queen herself apparently conquering her prejudices in favour of the Tory faction, joined the general voice of applause, and even went so far as to intimate a wish that the play might be dedicated to the Throne. This was perhaps a mere political manœuvre, the suggestion probably of Bolingbroke, who had previously acted a similar part; it failed, however, through a prior engagement of the author, who had intended the honour of inscription for the Duchess of Marlborough. Thus influenced by duty on the one hand, and honour on the other, he thought it necessary to adopt a neutral plan, and *Cato* appeared in the world without a dedication.

It was ostentatiously attended, however, by the oblations of several celebrated literary characters. Independent of the prologue and epilogue of Pope and Garth, Steele, Hughes, Young, Eusden, Tickell, Phillips, and Cotes presented complimentary verses; and among them is an excellent anonymous contribution, since known to have been the production of a character not well

* Warton's Pope, vol. vii. p. 217.

Digitized by Google

calculated to bestow fame by the disclosure of a name—Jefferys could not add a laurel to the brow of Addison.

The lines of Sir Richard Steele, as they bear strong testimony of that warmth of affection with which he ever regarded his amiable friend, I shall not hesitate to transcribe; they are written indeed with such an appearance of unadorned truth, as to convey the conviction of sincerity to every reader.

While you the fierce divided BRITONS awe,
And CATO with an equal virtue draw,
While *Envy is itself in wonder lost,*
And Factions strive who shall applaud you most;
Forgive the fond ambition of a friend,
Who hopes himself, not you to recommend,
And join th' applause which all the learn'd bestow
On one, to whom a perfect work they owe.
To my light scenes* I once inscrib'd your name,
And impotently strove to borrow fame:
Soon will that die, which adds thy name to mine;
Let me, then, live, join'd to a work of thine.

Cato was received upon the continent with not less distinguished honours than in its native island. Voltaire, in his Letters on the English Nation, has marked its merits and defects with no small discrimination. "The first English writer," he declares, "who composed a regular tragedy

* Tender Husband, dedicated to Mr. Addison.

Digitized by Google

and infused a spirit of elegance through every part of it, was the illustrious Mr. Addison. His Cato is a master-piece, both with regard to the diction, and the harmony and beauty of the numbers. The character of Cato is, in my opinion, greatly superior to that of Cornelia, in the Pompey of Corneille: for Cato is great without any thing of fustian; and Cornelia, who besides is not a necessary character, tends sometimes to bombast. Mr. Addison's Cato appears to me to be the greatest character that ever was brought upon any stage: but then the rest of them do not correspond to the dignity of this: and this dramatic piece, so excellently well written, is disfigured by a dull love-plot, which spreads a certain languor over the whole, that destroys the beauty of it."

He has expressed the same thoughts, likewise, but in a more elegant and compressed form, in the dedication of his tragedy of Zayre to Mr. Faulkner:

Addison l'a déjà tenté;
C'étoit le poëtæ des sages,
Mais il étoit trop concerté,
Et dans son Caton si vanté
Les deux filles, en vérité,
Sont d'insipides personages.
Imitez du grand Addison
Seulement ce qu'il a de bon.

Digitized by Google

Boyer and the Abbe du Bos translated Cato into French; Salvini and Valetta into Italian, and the Jesuits of St. Omer into Latin, a copy of which they transmitted to Mr. Addison. It had likewise German and French imitations: of the latter, one written by Des Champs, and highly praised in France, was translated into English blank verse, with the avowed intention of comparing it with, and preferring it to, the drama of Addison. The French Cato, however, soon sunk into merited obscurity. Of the celebrated Soliloquy with which the fifth act opens, there have been several very elegant Latin versions from the pens of our countrymen: those of Atterbury and Bland are worthy of the age of Augustus.

A play so prominently successful as was Cato, both on the stage and in the closet, was not likely to escape the fangs of criticism; a branch of literature which, at that period, was more generally employed in the detection of faults than in the developement of taste and beauty. It was speedily attacked by a gentleman of Oxford in a pamphlet entitled, *Mr. Addison turned Tory*, and whose aim was to reprobate the piece as a party production. Addison had an able defender in the person of Dr. Sewell, whose *Observations on Cato* are intended to prove that not to its political, but to its poetical merit, was its

Digitized by Google

favourable reception owing. It is a very accurate and entertaining criticism, say the authors of the Biographia Britannica, and contributed not a little to the securing our poet the hearts of his readers, as well as of his audience.

But the very genius of malignant criticism was destined to appear against Addison, in the formidable shape of JOHN DENNIS; a man whose irritability was stimulated almost to madness, by every trifling occasion, and who took a keen delight in depreciating whatever had attained the character of literary excellence. Having unhappily conceived an idea that he had been ill used by the authors of the Spectator,* no sooner did Cato make its appearance from the press, than he attacked it with the utmost virulence. That resentment for this supposed ill usage was the sole motive of his conduct, he has himself

* "Sir Richard Steele had promised our critic to take some opportunity of mentioning his works in public with advantage, and thereby of promoting his reputation. It, however, unfortunately happened, that Mr. Addison, who, perhaps, knew nothing of Sir Richard's engagement, quoted, in his paper upon Laughter, the two following lines, which he calls humourous and well-expressed, from Mr. Dennis's translation of a satire of Boileau's:

Thus one fool lolls his tongue out at another,
And shakes his empty noddle at his brother.

Mistaking this quotation for the performance of Sir Richard Steele's

confessed in a letter to the Duke of Buckingham, declaring that his only inducement for publishing his remarks on Cato was the treatment he had received in several numbers of the Spectator.*

From a principle of action so unworthy, originated the furious invective of Dennis. His anger even conquered his politics; for though a staunch Whig, and one of the most violent of his party, his resentment for fancied insults burnt so intensely, that, notwithstanding Cato was written in support of his own cause, he was among the foremost who attempted to vilify and degrade it. He first published a pamphlet in quarto, the object of which was to point out the improbability of the action and the absurdity of the plan. It is written, it must be confessed, with considerable ability; he has discovered with acuteness several errors and defects; but his manner is so coarse and illiberal, his spirit so manifestly captious and

promise, our author published a letter to the Spectator full of resentment, and which strongly marks the irritability of his disposition. What particularly displeased him was, that some far superior specimen was not exhibited of his poetic excellence; and he pointed out a passage in his poem on the Battle of Ramillies, which he thinks might have been preferred to the forementioned couplet."

Kippis's Life of Dennis, Biograph. Britan. vol. v.

* Original Letters, vol. i. p. 55—57.

Digitized by Google

malicious, that the reader soon sickens with disgust. What must we think of the Critic, who, when reviewing a work thick sown with beauties, shall, without noticing a single excellence, dwell minutely on its defects, and, not content with dragging forward what imperfections really exist, task his ingenuity for the production of imaginary faults.

If in this attempt to expose the conduct and fable of Cato he met with partial success, his succeeding effort to asperse and undervalue the sentiments of that play, and which occupies not less than seven letters, completely failed, and effectually unveiled to every eye the impotency and malignity of the man. To this latter publication the couplet of Pope, which contributed to bring on that great poet the unqualified abuse of Dennis, may very properly be applied:

> Some have at first for wits, then poets past,
> Turn'd critics next, and *prov'd plain fools at last.* *

The Bard of Twickenham, who, in irascibility and resentment, too nearly resembled poor Dennis, eagerly seized the opportunity for revenge, which the ill-natured criticism on Cato afforded;

* It is, I believe, an unquestioned fact, that Dennis one day finding on Lintot his bookseller's counter, the *Essay on Criticism*, he read a page or two with much frowning, till, coming to the above lines, he flung down the book in a terrible fury, and exclaimed, *By G—d, he means me.*

Digitized by Google

and with the double view of flattering Addison, and vexing Dennis, published *A Narrative of the Madness of John Dennis*, under the assumed name of Dr. Robert Norris, a production of undoubted wit and humour, but which, as Johnson has justly observed, "left the objections to the play in their full force, and therefore discovered more desire of vexing the critic than of defending the poet."*

It had been fortunate for Pope, if upon this and every other similar occasion, he had followed the example of Addison, who with great judgment avoided any reply, well knowing that such attention would only protract the existence of a work which without notice must soon drop into oblivion. The irascibility and satire of Pope and Swift, observes an elegant writer, were not less serviceable to Dennis, than the partial panegyrics of Dryden and Congreve. If insulted genius had not noticed Dennis, Dennis in vain would have insulted genius.†

Addison was likewise well convinced, that Pope acted by no means a disinterested part in this affair, and that his proffered friendship in thus standing forward was built merely on the scheme of injuring Dennis in his name; a plan which, whilst it gratified the spleen of Pope,

* Lives of the Poets, vol. ii. p. 93.
† D'Israeli's Miscellanies, p. 116.

Digitized by Google

threw the odium on his shoulders. He therefore requested Steele would wait upon Dennis; and assure him, that he felt hurt at the cruelty with which he had been treated, and that should he ever think it necessary to reply himself, the controversy should be conducted in such a manner as to preclude all personality and offence.

Johnson has, I think, very unnecessarily, inserted the greater part of Dennis's first criticism on Cato, in his life of Addison; it merited not the honour. There is neither taste nor feeling in any of its parts; and though its detection of improprieties be occasionally acute, it is outrageously severe, and the raillery with which it abounds is mere horse-play and vulgar abuse.

The keenness indeed of more modern criticism has not spared this noble drama; yet urbanity and elegance accompany the enquiry, and no other motive but that of serving the cause of literature has, I believe, dictated its decisions.

Dr. Warton, one of the most amiable and candid of our critics, has, if we except two or three remarks, given us a just picture of the merits and defects of Cato. "The Tragedy of Cato," says he, "is a glaring instance of the force of party; * so sententious and declamatory a

* When Addison spoke of the Secretary of State at that time, he always called him, in the language of Shakspeare, "That canker'd

drama would never have met with such rapid and amazing success, if every line and sentiment had not been particularly tortured and applied to recent events, and the reigning disputes of the times. The purity and energy of the diction, and the loftiness of the sentiments, copied in a great measure from Lucan, Tacitus, and Seneca the philosopher, merit approbation. But I have always thought, that those pompous Roman sentiments are not so difficult to be produced, as is vulgarly imagined; and which, indeed, dazzle only the vulgar. A stroke of nature is, in my opinion, worth a hundred such thoughts as

> When vice prevails, and impious men bear sway,
> The post of honour is a private station.

Cato is a fine dialogue on liberty, and the love of one's country; but considered as a dramatic performance, nay, as a model of a just tragedy, as some have affectedly represented it, it must be owned to want ACTION and PATHOS; the two hinges, I presume, on which a just tragedy ought

Bolingbroke." Notwithstanding this, Addison assured Pope, that he did not bring his tragedy on the stage with any party views; nay, desired Pope to carry the poem to the Lords Oxford and Bolingbroke, for their perusal. The play, however, was always considered as a warning to the people, that liberty was in danger during that Tory ministry.

Digitized by Google

necessarily to turn, and without which it cannot subsist. It wants also CHARACTER, although that be not so essentially necessary to a tragedy as action. Syphax, indeed, in his interview with Juba, bears some marks of a rough African: the speeches of the rest may be transferred to any of the personages concerned. The simile drawn from Mount Atlas, and the description of the Numidian traveller smothered in the desert, are indeed in character, but sufficiently obvious. How Addison could fall into the false and unnatural custom of ending his three first acts with similes, is amazing in so chaste and correct a writer. The loves of Juba and Marcia, of Portius and Lucia, are vicious and insipid episodes, debase the dignity, and destroy the unity of the fable.—It is pity that the tragedy of Cato, in which all the rules of the drama, as far as the mechanism of writing reaches, are observed, is not exact with respect to the unity of time. There was no occasion to extend the time of the fable longer than the mere representation takes up: all might have passed in the compass of three hours from the morning, with a description of which the play opens; if the poet, in the fourth scene of the fifth act, had not talked of the *setting* sun playing on the armour of the soldiers." *

* Essay on the Genius of Pope, vol. i. p. 270, 271, 275.

Digitized by Google

Too abundant declamation and the substitution of sentiment for passion, are certainly the great faults of Cato, and it is consequently deficient in exciting the emotions of pity and terror. I by no means think, however, that its defalcation in point of *character* is so great, that "with the exception of Syphax, the speeches of the rest may be transferred to any of the personages concerned." Marcus, Sempronius, and Juba, if not strongly characterized, are infinitely too much discriminated for such a transfer; and both Cato and his daughter Marcia, though, from the chill spirit of stoicism, not awakening deep interest, are yet accurately drawn and well supported.

The absurd practice of terminating every act in rhyme was unfortunately the fashion of the day, and we all know with what difficulty such bonds, however slight, are broken through. The simile which closes the second act, the Numidian traveller buried in the sand of the desert, is noble and appropriate; and had it appeared in blank verse would have been unexceptionable. One of the most sublime passages in modern poetry, the destruction of the army of Cambyses, may be deemed an expansion of these lines of Addison. What the author of Cato could with propriety only briefly paint, Dr. Darwin, taking advantage of the accurate detail of Bruce, has

Digitized by Google

given at full length; and the close of his description is indeed dreadfully awful. The army of the Persian monarch, decimated by famine, is represented on its fatal march to the temple of Jupiter Ammon:

Now o'er their head the whizzing whirlwinds breathe,
And the live desert pants, and heaves beneath;
Ting'd by the crimson sun, vast columns rise
Of eddying sands, and war amid the skies,
In red arcades the billowy plain surround,
And stalking turrets dance upon the ground.
——Long ranks in vain their shining blades extend,
To demon-gods their knees unhallow'd bend,
Wheel in wide circle, form in hollow square,
And now they front, and now they fly the war,
Pierce the deaf tempest with lamenting cries,
Press their parch'd lips, and close their blood-shot eyes.
——Gnomes! o'er the waste you led your myriad powers,
Climb'd on the whirls, and aim'd the flinty showers!—
Onward resistless rolls the infuriate surge,
Clouds follow clouds, and mountains mountains urge;
Wave over wave the driving desert swims,
Bursts o'er their heads, inhumes their struggling limbs!
Man mounts on man, on camels camels rush,
Hosts march o'er hosts, and nations nations crush,—
Wheeling in air the winged islands fall,
And one great earthy ocean covers all!—
Then ceas'd the storm,—NIGHT bow'd his Ethiop brow
To earth, and listen'd to the groans below,—
Grim HORROR shook,—awhile the living hill
Heav'd with convulsive throes,—and all was still!*

* Botanic Garden, Part i. p. 99.

Digitized by Google

Of the amatory parts of Cato I am afraid not much can be said in vindication. The interview, however, between Portius and Lucia, where the latter takes her vow, is animated; and there are strokes of passion and pathos in the scene where Marcia laments over the supposed corse of Juba. It is to be regretted that Addison ever altered his original plan; for Pope declared to Mr. Spence, that the frigid love scenes, which now form so considerable a portion of this tragedy, were not in Addison's first draught, but were introduced in compliance with the popular practice of the stage.* Love, who reigns a tyrant if he reigns at all, can never occupy with effect a secondary part in any tragedy; and the piece should either be exclusively built upon this universal passion, or entirely devoid of it. No amatory episode could add interest to *Macbeth*, to *Lear*, or to *Douglas*.

I am much surprised that Dr. Warton should consider the *unity of time* as violated in Cato. Even in the ancient drama, where the action was never interrupted, nor the chorus ever absent from the stage, Aristotle has allowed a period of twenty-four hours, or a little longer. His very words are, "Tragedy endeavours as much as

* Vide Warton's Pope, vol. i. p. 343.—Note.

Digitized by Google

possible to confine itself to *one revolution of the sun*, or only to exceed it a little."* Now in Cato, a drama with measured intervals, little more than twelve hours elapse between the commencement and completion of the action, by no means more than sufficient for the business of the play, which, if the time of the representation and the fable had been rendered exactly equal, could not have been transacted without utter improbability.

Dr. Johnson differs not essentially in opinion from the elegant critic we have just quoted. "Of Cato," he remarks, "it has been not unjustly determined, that it is rather a poem in dialogue than a drama, rather a succession of just sentiments in elegant language, than a representation of natural affections, or of any state probable or possible in human life. Nothing here "excites or assuages emotion;" here is "no magical power of raising phantastic terror or wild anxiety." The events are expected without solicitude, and are remembered without joy or sorrow. Of the agents we have no care; we consider not what they are doing, or what they are suffering; we wish only to know what they have to say. Cato is a being above our solicitude; a man of whom

* Pye's Translation, p. 15, 4to edition.

Digitized by Google

the gods take care, and whom we leave to their care with heedless confidence. To the rest, neither gods nor men can have much attention; for there is not one among them that strongly attracts either affection or esteem. But they are made the vehicles of such sentiments and such expression, that there is scarcely a scene in the play which the reader does not wish to impress upon his memory.—Its success has introduced or confirmed among us the use of dialogue too declamatory, of unaffecting elegance and chill philosophy.*

This, like the preceding decision of Dr. Warton, is too severe; and we agree with Dr. Hurd in thinking, that if Cato were too much extolled on its first appearance, it has since been greatly undervalued.† Accustomed as our audiences were to intricacy of plot and variety of scene, the simplicity of the fable of Cato, and its rigorous adherence to unity of place, would necessarily, when the fever of party subsided, cut short its popularity on the stage. But in the closet it merits all the admiration that it once acquired. To affirm, that it is *no representation of natural affections, nor of any state probable or possible in human life*, is going too far. The charac-

* Lives of the Poets, vol. ii. p. 118, 119.

† Vide Notes on the Art of Poetry, vol. i. p. 80.

Digitized by Google

ter of Cato is preserved, according to the truth of history; and as a patriot, a father, and a friend, he is the medium of actions and sentiments which display the most exalted sublimity, a morality truly rational and pure, and a benevolence ever active and unbounded.

It is somewhat singular, that Johnson should have censured this production in terms which so accurately describe his own drama; *dialogue too declamatory, unaffecting elegance, and chill philosophy*, are, I will venture to assert, still more characteristic of IRENE than of Cato.*

Had not the latter part of Addison's life been greatly absorbed by political duty, it was his intention to have written another tragedy on the *Death of Socrates*, a subject which would have furnished an excellent companion for *Cato*, and would have been equally susceptible of sublime sentiment and preceptive wisdom.

During the successful career of Cato on the stage appeared *The Guardian*, a daily paper which we have already noticed at some length in the life of Steele. To this work Addison contributed many excellent essays, several of which

* It is not generally known, says Dr. Rippis, that Mr. Addison borrowed several lines of the celebrated soliloquy, at the beginning of the fifth act, from May's Supplement to Lucan.

Biographia Britannica.

we shall hereafter have occasion to particularize. In playful humour, in accurate observation on life and manners, in vigour of imagination and utility of precept, they are not inferior to their predecessors.

In the original mode of publishing the Guardian in half sheets, the papers of Addison were not ascertained by any signature; but Steele, when the work re-appeared in octavo, distinguished them by affixing the figure of a hand.

No sooner was the Guardian closed, than our author was solicited by his friend, Mr. John Hughes, to unite with him in conducting another periodical paper, under the title of *The Register*. The following letter and its answer particularly relate to this design, which, when declined by Addison, was in some degree carried into execution by Mr. Hughes and Sir Richard Blackmore, in a paper under the title of the "Lay Monastery."

TO MR. ADDISON.

DEAR SIR, Oct. 6, 1713.

I DO not doubt but you know, by this time, that Mr. Steele has abruptly dropped the Guardian. He has published this day a paper called the Englishman, which begins with an anwer to the Examiner, written with great boldness and spirit, and shews that his thoughts are at present

Digitized by Google

entirely on politics. Some of his friends are in pain about him, and are concerned that a paper should be discontinued, which might have been generally entertaining without engaging in party matters.

I know not whether such a paper as the Guardian may hereafter be attempted by other hands. I remember you were once pleased to ask me what I thought would be a good plan, and this unexpected occasion has given me a thought, which I beg leave to offer to your consideration; and because I cannot at this distance so well explain it to you in the compass of a letter, I inclose a slight sketch I have just begun of it to day; only I must acquaint you, that what I send is a sequel of a paper which is to open the plan, and which describes a society of learned men of various characters, who meet together to carry on a conversation on all kinds of subjects, and who empower their secretary to draw up any of their discourses, or publish any of their writings under the title of The Register. By this means, I think, the town might be sometimes entertained with a dialogue, which will be a new way of writing, either related or set down in form, under the names of different speakers; and sometimes with essays, or with discourses in the person of the writer of the paper.

Digitized by Google

I choose to send you the second paper, though unfinished, because you will see an offer in it at a new-invented character, with a cast of oddness in it to draw attention, and to lay a foundation for a great variety of matter and adventures. I wish I could tempt you, by any slight thought of mine, to take something of this kind into consideration; I should, on such conditions, be willing to furnish one paper in a week, on this or any plan you shall think more proper, but without you I shall make no further use of it. I shall only add, that it is my opinion, and I believe that of most others, that such a paper should be published only three times a-week; when it should begin, or whether at all or not, I submit to you, and shall be glad to be favoured with a few lines from you on this. JOHN HUGHES.

DEAR SIR, Bilton, near Rugby, Oct. 12, 1713.

I AM very much obliged to you for your kind letter, and the specimen, which I read over with great pleasure. I think the title of The Register would be less assuming than that of The Humanity Club; but to tell you truly, I have been so taken up with thoughts of that nature for these two or three years last past, that I must now take some time *pour me delasser*, and lay in fuel for a future work. In the mean time, I should be glad

Digitized by Google

if you would set such a project on foot, for I know nobody else capable of succeeding in it, and turning it to the good of mankind, since my friend has laid it down. I am in a thousand troubles for poor Dick, and wish that his zeal for the public may not be ruinous to himself; but he has sent me word, that he is determined to go on, and that any advice I can give him in this particular will have no weight with him.

I beg you will present my most sincere respects to Sir Richard Blackmore, and that you will add my sister's, who is now with me, and is very much his humble servant. I wish I could see him and yourself in these parts, where I think of staying a month or two longer. I am always, with great truth and esteem,

SIR,

Your most faithful
and most obedient servant,

J. ADDISON.*

If we duly reflect on the numerous and exquisite productions of Addison in the Tatler, Spectator, and Guardian, the most fertile genius must assuredly have deemed a pause in this species of composition necessary.

* Vide Letters by several eminent persons, deceased, published by the Reverend Mr. Duncombe, vol. i. 2d edition.

Digitized by Google

He was induced, however, the succeeding year, by his regard for Sir Richard Steele, to furnish him with an essay for his paper entitled *The Lover*. As this is the only number which Addison is certainly known to have contributed * to this work, as it is replete with humour, finished in his best manner, and completes his papers not written on political subjects, I have little doubt that its introduction in this place will confer a favour on my readers. It was intended to ridicule the fashion which at that time prevailed among the ladies of collecting splendid but useless loads of china. This absurd taste was indulged at immense expence, and, unfortunately for many families, lasted some years. Such was the ridiculous excess to which it was carried, that the mansions of our nobility and gentry had rather the appearance of shops filled with merchandize for sale than houses appropriated to elegance and utility.

* No. 39 has been supposed, though without any good authority, to have been contributed by Addison. It is principally occupied by specimens of a Translation of Theophrastus by Budgell, and was written to recommend it,

Digitized by Google

LOVER, N° 10.

THURSDAY, MARCH 18, 1713-14.

Magis illa placent quæ pluris emuntur.
JUV. Sat. ii. 16.

——————If very dear the cost,
It has a flavour then which pleases most.

I HAVE lately been very much teased with the thought of Mrs. Anne Page, and the memory of those many cruelties which I suffered from that obdurate fair one. Mrs. Anne was in a particular manner very fond of china ware, against which I had unfortunately declared my aversion. I do not know but this was the first occasion of her coldness towards me, which makes me sick at the very sight of a china dish ever since. This is the best introduction I can make for my present discourse, which may serve to fill up a gap till I am more at leisure to resume the thread of my amours.

There are no inclinations in women which more surprise me than their passions for chalk and china. The first of these maladies wears out in a little time; but when a woman is visited with the second, it generally takes possession of her for life. China vessels are playthings for women of all ages. An old lady of forescore shall be as busy in cleaning an Indian mandarin, as her great-grand-daughter is in dressing her baby.

Digitized by Google

The common way of purchasing such trifles, if I may believe my female informers, is by exchanging old suits of clothes for this brittle ware. The potters of China have, it seems, their factors at this distance, who retail out their several manufactures for cast clothes and superannuated garments. I have known an old petticoat metamorphosed into a punch-bowl, and a pair of breeches into a tea-pot. For this reason my friend TRADEWELL in the city calls his great room that is nobly furnished out with china, his wife's wardrobe. In yonder corner, says he, are above twenty suits of clothes, and on that scrutoire above one hundred yards of furbelowed silk. You cannot imagine how many night-gowns, stays, and manteaus, went to the raising of that pyramid. The worst of it is, says he, a suit of clothes is not suffered to last half its time, that it may be the more vendible; so that in reality this is but a more dexterous way of picking the husband's pocket; who is often purchasing a great vase of china, when he fancies that he is buying a fine head, or a silk gown for his wife. There is likewise another inconvenience in this female passion for china, namely, that it administers to them great matter for wrath and sorrow. How much anger and affliction are produced daily in the hearts of my dear countrywomen, by the breach of this frail furniture! Some of them pay

Digitized by Google

half their servants wages in china fragments, which their carelessness has produced. "If thou hast a piece of earthen-ware, consider," says Epictetus, "that it is a piece of earthen-ware, and by consequence very easy and obnoxious to be broken: be not therefore so void of reason as to be angry or grieved when this comes to pass." In order, therefore, to exempt my fair readers from such additional and supernumerary calamities of life, I would advise them to forbear dealing in these perishable commodities, till such time as they are philosophers enough to keep their tempers at the fall of a tea-pot or a china cup. I shall further recommend to their serious consideration these three particulars: first, that all china ware is of a weak and transitory nature. Secondly, that the fashion of it is changeable: and, thirdly, that it is of no use. And first of the first. The fragility of china is such as a reasonable being ought by no means to set its heart upon, though at the same time I am afraid I may complain with SENECA on the like occasion, that this very consideration recommends them to our choice; our luxury being grown so wanton, that this kind of treasure becomes the more valuable the more easily we may be deprived of it, and that it receives a price from its brittleness. There is a kind of ostentation in wealth, which sets the possessors of it upon distinguishing themselves in

Digitized by Google

those things where it is hard for the poor to follow them. For this reason I have often wondered that our ladies have not taken pleasure in egg-shells, especially in those which are curiously stained and streaked, and which are so very tender, that they require the nicest hand to hold without breaking them. But as if the brittleness of this ware were not sufficient to make it costly, the very fashion of it is changeable; which brings me to my second particular.

It may chance that a piece of china may survive all those accidents to which it is by nature liable, and last for some years, if rightly situated and taken care of. To remedy therefore this inconvenience, it is so ordered, that the shape of it shall grow unfashionable, which makes new supplies always necessary, and furnishes employment for life to women of great and generous souls, who cannot live out of the mode. I myself remember when there were few china vessels to be seen that held more than a dish of coffee; but their size is so gradually enlarged, that there are many at present, which are capable of holding half a hogshead. The fashion of the tea-cup is also greatly altered, and has run through a wonderful variety of colour, shape, and size.

But in the last place china ware is of no use. Who would not laugh to see a smith's shop furnished with anvils and hammers of china? The

Digitized by Google

furniture of a lady's favourite room is altogether as absurd: you see jars of a prodigious capacity that are to hold nothing. I have seen horses and herds of cattle in this fine porcelane, not to mention the several Chinese ladies, who, perhaps, are naturally enough represented in these frail materials.

Did our women take delight in heaping up piles of earthen platters, brown jugs, and the like useful products of our British potteries, there would be some sense in it. They might be ranged in as fine figures, and disposed of in as beautiful pieces of architecture; but there is an objection to these which cannot be overcome, namely, that they would be of some use, and might be taken down on all occasions, to be employed in services of the family; besides that they are intolerably cheap, and most shamefully durable and lasting.

During these varied literary occupations Addison had occasionally employed his pen in political discussion. Though moderate in his views and principles, he was by no means lukewarm with regard to any thing deemed necessary for the public good, and was ever ready to give his ablest support to what on mature consideration he approved. In November, 1707, he published a pamphlet entitled, *The present State of the War,*

Digitized by Google

and the Necessity of an Augmentation; it is written with vigour, and displays considerable information both with respect to our own interests and those of foreign nations; but the nature of the subject, and its application merely to existing circumstances, have necessarily thrown it into obscurity.

His next political effort appeared in 1710, under the appellation of the *Whig-Examiner*, and is a most severe retaliation upon the *Tory-Examiner*, conducted by Swift and his associates. Addison's share extends but to five numbers, and the paper soon dropped, to the great joy of the opposite party, who, incompetent to produce anything which might contend with it in argument and humour, made confession of their impotency by publicly exulting in its death.* In no part of his works has our author exhibited greater brilliancy of wit, or more cutting satire, than in these five essays, which, had their subject been less of a temporary kind, must have retained their popularity and lustre to the present hour. The smile of good nature in general plays round

* Swift, in allusion to a Tory song then in vogue, of which the chorus is,

And he that will this health deny,
Down among the dead men let him lie,

exclaimed with rapture on the expiration of the Whig-Examiner, "It is now down among the dead men."

Digitized by Google

the satire of Addison; but in the Whig-Examiner he has shewn himself a perfect master of that unsparing and sarcastic severity which distinguishes the writings of Swift. Both the matter and the style of the Tory-Examiner are placed in the most ludicrous light. In N° 2, speaking of his opponent's love for the figure termed *anti-climax*, he produces the following as a happy specimen, "Mankind," says the Tory-Examiner, "remains convinced, that a queen, possessed of all the virtues requisite to bless a nation, or make a private family happy, sits on the throne." "Is this panegyric or burlesque?" remarks Addison. "To see so glorious a queen celebrated in such a manner, gives every good subject a secret indignation, and looks like Scarron's character of the great queen Semiramis, who, says that author, was the founder of Babylon, conqueror of the East, and an excellent housewife;" and in the opening of the succeeding number, ridiculing the Examiner's long and frequent interruption to the progress of his subject, he thus illustrates the practice. "I was once talking with an old humdrum fellow, and before I had heard his story out, was called away by business. About *three years* after I met him again, when he immediately reassumed the thread of his story, and began his salutation with, 'But, sir, as I was telling you.'

Digitized by Google

The same method has been made use of by—— the Examiner."

Nothing can exceed the keen humour and severity of his Encomium upon *Nonsense*, introduced in the fourth number. "I must here solemnly protest," says he, "that I have not done it, (alluding to the panegyric on nonsense) to curry favour with my antagonist, or to reflect any praise in an oblique manner upon the Letter to the Examiner: I have no private considerations to warp me in this controversy, since my first entering upon it. But before I proceed any further, because it may be of great use to me in this dispute to state the whole nature of nonsense, and because it is a subject entirely new, I must take notice that there are two kinds of it, viz. *High* NONSENSE and *Low* NONSENSE.

"LOW NONSENSE is the talent of a cold phlegmatic temper, that in a poor dispirited style creeps along servilely through darkness and confusion. A writer of this complexion gropes his way softly amongst self-contradictions, and grovels in absurdities.

Videri vult pauper, et est pauper.
He has neither wit, nor sense, and pretends to none.

"On the contrary, your HIGH NONSENSE blusters and makes a noise: it stalks upon hard words, and rattles through polysyllables. It is

Digitized by Google

loud and sonorous, smooth and periodical. It has something in it like manliness and force, and makes one think of the name of Sir *Hercules Nonsense* in the play called 'The Nest of Fools.' In a word, your *High* NONSENSE has a majestic appearance, and wears a most tremendous garb, like Æsop's ass clothed in a lion's skin.

"When *Aristotle* lay upon his death-bed, and was asked whom he would appoint for his successor in the school, two of his scholars being candidates for it, he called for two different sorts of wine, and by the character which he gave of them denoted the different qualities and perfections that shewed themselves in the style and writings of each of the competitors. As rational writings have been represented by *wine*, I shall represent those kinds of writings we are now speaking of, by *small beer*.

"*Low* NONSENSE is like that in the *barrel*, which is altogether flat, tasteless, and insipid. *High* NONSENSE is like that in the *bottle*, which has in reality no more strength and spirit than the other, but frets, and flies, and bounces, and by the help of a little wind that is got into it, imitates the passions of a much nobler liquor.

"We meet with a low grovelling nonsense in every Grub-street production; but I think there are none of our present writers who have hit the sublime in nonsense, besides Dr. Sacheve-

Digitized by Google

rell in divinity, and the author of this letter in politics; between whose characters in their respective professions, there seems to be a very nice resemblance."

In 1713, our author, not satisfied with the commercial treaty just then concluded with France, wrote a little pamphlet, entitled *The late Trial and Conviction of Count Tariff*, with the view of ridiculing the tory ministry, and exposing their weakness in the arrangement of this important compact. It is deficient neither in wit nor argument, but can excite no interest beyond the existence of the controversy which gave it birth.

The death of the queen in the succeeding year opened a new field for the political exertions of Mr. Addison. During the latter part of her reign he had obtained no public employment; but no sooner was the regency arranged, than the lords justices appointed him their secretary, an office, the first duty of which involved him in no little trouble and anxiety. He was required to announce the vacancy of the throne to the court of Hanover, a task easily executed by the most common abilities; but Addison, impressed by the magnitude of the occasion, and solicitous that his style and diction should possess a correspondent dignity, was so long occupied in modulating his periods and selecting his expressions, that the

Digitized by Google

lords of the regency, surprised and impatient at the delay, ordered Mr. Southwell, one of the clerks of the office, to state the event. This he immediately did in the usual language of business, and had the vanity to imagine that, because he had expressed the fact with facility, he had risen beyond the level of Addison.

English literature, perhaps, sustained no inconsiderable loss by this return of our author to political employment. It compelled him to relinquish a favourite design of presenting the public with an English Dictionary, which it was his intention should have been executed on the plan of the celebrated Italian one of the Academy della Crusca of Florence. He had chosen Tillotson as the standard of our language, an author to whom he was well known to have been remarkably partial; and had selected from the sermons published during the bishop's life-time, a copious collection of idioms and phraseology. This collection our late learned lexicographer had seen, though too late to answer the purpose it was meant to serve. "There was formerly sent to me," says Johnson, "by Mr. Locker, clerk of the Leathersellers' company, who was eminent for curiosity and literature, a collection of examples selected from Tillotson's works, as Locker said, by Addison. It came too late to be of use, so I

Digitized by Google

inspected it but slightly, and remember it indistinctly. I thought the passages too short."* Addison, it must be confessed, was, like Johnson, not altogether adapted for this undertaking; they were, though elegant classical scholars, not well versed in *old English literature*, and both were perfectly unacquainted with the Gothic tongues. A deep knowledge of Saxon is now, I believe, generally considered as indispensable to a work of this kind, as essential to an explication of the structure and etymology of our language. To the labours of Mr. Horne Tooke and Sir Herbert Croft, English grammar and philology look forward with ardent hopes. The Epea-Pteroenta of the one, and the long-promised Dictionary of the other, will probably establish on foundations not easily to be shaken the critical analysis of our tongue.

On the arrival of George the First from Hanover, the new government had it in contemplation to create Mr. Addison secretary of state; an elevation which he then resolutely refused, but, at the same time, again readily accepted the office of secretary to the Earl of Sunderland, lord lieutenant of Ireland. This post, however, he did not long retain; for, on the earl's

* Lives of the Poets, vol. ii. p. 101.

Digitized by Google

removal, which took place shortly after our author's nomination to the secretaryship, he became a lord of trade.

This promotion was soon succeeded by the rebellion of 1715, an event which called forth the most strenuous exertions of Mr. Addison, in favour of the House of Hanover. The *Freeholder*, which has been justly termed a *political Spectator*, stands at the head of its class, and was written by our author to evince the enormity of rebellion, and to repel the prejudices of ignorance and faction. It commenced December 23d, 1715; was published every Friday and Monday, and, having reached fifty-five numbers, closed on the twenty-ninth of June, 1716.

Though in this work Addison was entirely unassisted, every page indicates an unwearied spirit. The same elegance and sweetness of style, the same humour and allegoric vein of description, which distinguished his former periodical writings, are discoverable in these essays. Political periodical papers, which have been extremely numerous in this country, have seldom survived the occasion which gave them birth. Who now enquires for the productions of Welwood or L'Estrange? Even the *Freeholder*, owing to the polemical nature of its subject, and notwithstanding its beauty of style and fecundity of illustra-

Digitized by Google

tion, is seldom read through. It possesses, however, some delineations, which, being exact copies from nature, are independent of local circumstances, and will live for ever. Of these the portrait of the *Tory Fox-Hunter*, with which, as Johnson observes, "Bigotry itself must be delighted," is so exquisitely drawn, that I purpose introducing it with a few observations in the Essay on the *Humour* of Addison.

If the literary merit of the *Freeholder* be great, its political moderation is entitled to no inferior encomium. At a period when scurrility and abuse were thought more efficient, in proportion as they were keen and bitter, this work presented a specimen of what urbanity combined with wit and argument might effect. Though Steele is said to have declared, that the ministry in employing Addison had chosen a lute, when they should have selected a trumpet, the *Freeholder*, it is acknowledged, proved of essential service to the government, and contributed much towards the promotion of its tranquillity and establishment.

About this time he published his most ingenious and spirited little poem, addressed to Sir Godfrey Kneller on his picture of the King, which closes with an enumeration of the works of Phidias; and so exactly adapted are the deities that he,

Digitized by Google

selects to the peculiar circumstances of a portion of the British history, as to occasion the most pleasing surprise. Describing the statues of the Grecian sculptor, he observes,

> * Great Pan who wont to chase the fair,
> And lov'd the spreading *oak*, was there;
> Old Saturn too, with upcast eyes,
> Beheld his *abdicated skies*;
> And mighty Mars, for war renown'd,
> In adamantine armour frown'd:
> By him the childless goddess rose,
> Minerva, studious to compose
> Her twisted threads; the web she strung,
> And o'er a loom of marble hung;
> Thetis the troubled Ocean's queen,
> Match'd with a *mortal*, next was seen
> Reclining on a funeral urn,
> Her short-liv'd darling son to mourn.
> The last was HE, whose thunder slew
> The Titan race, a rebel crew,
> That from a HUNDRED HILLS ally'd,
> In impious league their king defy'd.

In 1716 our author entered into the matrimonial state. He had long solicited the Countess Dowager of Warwick, a lady who placed an undue value upon high birth, and who appears to

* *Charles* II. remarkable for his lewdness, and for his seclusion in the oak. *James* II. *William* III. *Queen Mary*, who had no heirs, and was a great work-woman. *Queen Anne*, married to the Prince of Denmark, and who lost the Duke of Gloucester in his youth. *George* I. who conquered the Highland rebels at Preston, 1715.

Digitized by Google

have had little estimation for literature or genius. It has hitherto been uniformly asserted, that Addison became acquainted with her by being appointed tutor to her son; an assertion, however, without the least shadow of proof, and which appears indeed to be positively contradicted by facts. There are two letters extant, addressed by Addison, in 1708, when under-secretary of state, to the young earl, who was, at that time, but nine years of age; these I shall transcribe, as they not only display the great good humour and playful condescension of Addison, but clearly shew that, at this period, the earl had a domestic tutor, with whom he was acquiring a knowledge of the Latin classics.

MY DEAR LORD, May 20th, 1708.

I HAVE employed the whole neighbourhood in looking after birds' nests, and not altogether without success. My man found one last night; but it proved a hen's with fifteen eggs in it, covered with an old broody duck, which may satisfy your lordship's curiosity a little, though I am afraid the eggs will be of little use to us. This morning I have news brought me of a nest that has abundance of little eggs, streaked with red and blue veins, that, by the description they give me, must make a very beautiful figure on a string.

Digitized by Google

My neighbours are very much divided in their opinion upon them; some say they are sky-larks; others will have them to be a canary bird's; but I am much mistaken in the turn and colour of the eggs, if they are not full of tom-tits. If your lordship does not make haste, I am afraid they will be birds before you see them; for, if the account they give me of them be true, they can't have above two days more to reckon.

Since I am *so near* your Lordship, methinks, after having passed the day *among more severe studies*, you may often *take a trip hither*, and relax yourself with these little curiosities of nature. I assure you, no less a man than Cicero commends the two great friends of his age, Scipio and Lælius, for entertaining themselves at their country-houses, which stood on the sea-shore, with picking up cockle-shells, and looking after birds'-nests. For which reason I shall conclude this learned letter with a saying of the same author, in his Treatise on Friendship. "Absint autem tristitia, et in omni re severitas habent illa quidem gravitatem; sed amicitia debet esse lenior et remissior, et ad omnem suavitatem facilitatemque morum proclivior." If your lordship understands the elegance and sweetness of these words, you may assure yourself you are no ordinary

Digitized by Google

Latinist; but if they have force enough to bring you to Sandy End, I shall be very well pleased.

I am, MY DEAR LORD,
Your lordship's
most affectionate and
most humble servant,
J. ADDISON.

MY DEAREST LORD, May 27th, 1708.

I CAN'T forbear being troublesome to your lordship *whilst I am in your neighbourhood*. The business of this is to invite you to a concert of music, which I have found out in a neighbouring wood. It begins precisely at six in the evening, and consists of a blackbird, a thrush, a robin redbreast, and a bull-finch. There is a lark, that, by way of overture, sings and mounts till she is almost out of hearing; and afterwards, falling down leisurely, drops to the ground, or as soon as she has ended her song. The whole is concluded by a nightingale, that has a much better voice than Mrs. Tofts, and something of the Italian manner in her divisions. If your lordship will honour me with your company, I will promise to entertain you with much better music, and more agreeable scenes, than you ever met with at the opera; and will conclude with a

Digitized by Google

charming description of a nightingale, out of our friend Virgil—

Qualis populeâ mœrens Philomela sub umbrâ
Amissos queritur fœtus, quos durus arator
Observans nido implumes, detraxit; at illa
Flet noctem, ramoque sedens, miserabile carmen
Integrat, et mœstis late loca questibus implet.

So, close in poplar shades, her children gone,
The mother nightingale laments alone;
Whose nest some prying churl had found, and thence
By stealth convey'd th' unfeather'd innocence.
But she supplies the night with mournful strains,
And melancholy music fills the plains.

DRYDEN.

Your lordship's most obedient,

J. ADDISON.

We likewise learn from these letters, that Addison had a house in the immediate neighbourhood of the countess; and he very early, it is said, after his introduction to the family, entertained an attachment for her; but the extreme diffidence of his disposition, rendered still more oppressive by disparity of rank, precluded for a long period any declaration of his affection. She in the mean time played with and ridiculed his passion, and it was not until he had risen to consequence in the state that he dared to unveil his wishes. At length, after a courtship the pro-

Digitized by Google

traction and anxiety of which had been great, his assiduity was rewarded by her hand.

The Muses were not altogether silent upon this occasion. The following poem, written by Mr. Welsted, possesses some merit, and was "addressed to the Countess of Warwick on her marriage, Aug. 2, 1716:

Ambition long has woman's heart betray'd,
And tinsel grandeur caught th' unwary maid;
The pompous styles, that strike th' admiring throng,
Have glitter'd in the eye of beauty long:
You, madam, first the female taste improve,
And give your fellow-charmers laws for love;
A pomp you covet, not to heralds known,
And sigh for virtues equal to your own;
Part in a man immortal greatly claim,
And frown on titles, to ally with fame;
Not Edward's star, emboss'd with silver rays,
Can vie in glory with thy consort's bays;
His country's pride does homage to thy charms,
And every merit crowds into thy arms.

While others gain light conquests by their eyes,
'Tis thine with wisdom to subdue the wise:
To their soft chains while courtly beaux submit,
'Tis thine to lead in triumph captive wit:
Her sighing vassals let Clarinda boast,
Of lace and languishing cockades the toast;
In beauty's pride unenvy'd let her reign,
And share that wanton empire with the vain.
For thee the arts of Greece and Rome combine,
And all the glories Cato gain'd are thine:

Digitized by Google

Still Warwick in thy boasted rank of life,
But more illustrious than when Warwick's wife.
Come forth, reveal thyself, thou chosen bride,
And shew great Nassau's poet by thy side;
Thy bright example shall instruct the fair,
And future nymphs shall make renown their care;
Embroidery less shall charm the virgin's eye,
And kind coquets for plumes less frequent die;
Secure shall beauty reign, the Muse its guard;
The Muse shall triumph, beauty its reward.*

If Addison, however, promised himself much felicity from this connection, there is every reason to suppose that he was greatly disappointed. Johnson has remarked, that their marriage "neither found them nor made them equal," an observation which, if it mean any thing, can only imply a bitter satire on the folly and supercilious pride of the countess. In point of intellect there could be no competition; and despicable must have been the ignorance of that woman, who could for a moment suppose that the mere casualty of splendid birth entitled her to treat with contempt, and to arrogate a superiority over a man of exquisite genius and unsullied virtue. There is but too much authority, however, to believe that she seldom considered her husband in any other than a very inferior light, that

* Vide Steele's Epistolary Correspondence, vol. ii. p. 500, 501.

Digitized by Google

she treated him with no deference, and even endeavoured to teach the only child she had by him to despise the memory of her father.*

It is reported, though I know not upon what foundation, that the beautiful ballad, called *The Despairing Shepherd*, was written by Rowe as descriptive of Addison's feelings and situation previous to his union. Had the poet attempted to describe the feelings of his friend a few months after the completion of his marriage, I am afraid he would have been compelled to draw a much more melancholy picture; it is, in short, to be suspected, and who will not feel poignant regret at the idea, that the days of Addison were shortened by connubial infelicity.

The year succeeding this ill-starred connection carried Addison to the zenith of his political power. He was appointed by the King, in

* "She was bred up," says the editor of the Tatler (edit. 1797,) "with little veneration for his memory. A very respectable lady, who was educated with her at the same boarding-school, assured this writer, that she was there distinguished by her marked dislike to his writings, and her unconquerable aversion to the perusal of them. It appears, therefore, that she discovered very early in life as great an unlikeness and inferiority to Addison, in respect of filial sentiment, as she is said to do in point of understanding.—This lady, however, afterwards, the annotator has been assured, had a great reverence for her father's memory, and a suitable regard for his writings."—*Note on Tatler*, No. 255.

Digitized by Google

April 1717, one of his principal secretaries of state, an office which he had formerly refused, and which he now accepted, stimulated perhaps by the wishes or commands of his countess, with no confidence in his own abilities for the employment. In fact, though well acquainted with the laws and constitution of his country, nature had not formed him for a statesman. Of promptitude and self-reliance he had no portion; his timidity was unconquerable, and he could neither speak in the House of Commons for the necessary support of administration, nor could he in his official department execute an order without wasting time in the fastidious selection and arrangement of his words.*

The consciousness of these defects, ever accompanied by sensations of inquietude, together with a very delicate state of health, soon induced him to decline all public business. He solicited, therefore, and obtained permission to retire; and with a pension of fifteen hundred pounds a year

* "I received the news," says Lady Wortley Montague, "of Mr. Addison's being declared secretary of state with the less surprise, in that I know that post was offered him before. At that time he declined it; and I really believe he would have done well to have declined it now: such a post as that, and such a wife as the countess, do not seem to be, in prudence, eligible for a man that is asthmatic; and we may see the day when he will be glad to resign them both." *Letter from Constantinople, 1717.*

Digitized by Google

he left the fatigues of office for the more congenial pursuits of literature and taste.

He resigned his post on the fourteenth of March, 1718; and six days afterwards thus expressed to his friend Dr. Swift, the joy which he felt at the liberation:

DEAR SIR, March 20th, 1718.

MULTIPLICITY of business and a long dangerous fit of sickness have prevented me from answering the obliging letter you honoured me with some time since: but, God be thanked, I cannot make use of either of these excuses at present, being entirely free both of my office and my asthma. I dare not, however, venture myself abroad yet; but have sent the contents of your last to a friend of mine (for he is very much so, though he is my successor*) who I hope will turn it to the advantage of the gentleman whom you mention. I know you have so much zeal and pleasure in doing kind offices for those you wish well to, that I hope you represent the hardships of the case in the strongest colours that it can possibly bear. However, as I always honoured you for your good nature, which is a very odd quality to celebrate in a man who has talents so much more shining in the eyes of the world, I should

* James Craggs, Esq.

Digitized by Google

be glad if I could any way concur with you, in putting a stop to what you say is now in agitation.

I must here condole with you upon the loss of that excellent man, the bishop of Derry,* who has scarce left behind him his equal in humanity, agreeable conversation, and all kinds of learning. We have often talked of you with great pleasure; and, upon this occasion, I cannot but reflect upon myself, who, at the same time that I omit no opportunity of expressing my esteem for you to others, have been so negligent in doing it to yourself. I have several times taken up my pen to write to you, but have been always interrupted by some impertinence or other; and to tell you unreservedly, I have been unwilling to answer so agreeable a letter as that I received from you, with one written in form only; but I must still have continued silent, had I deferred writing till I could have made a suitable return. Shall we never again talk together in laconic? Whenever you see England, your company will be the most acceptable in the world at Holland-house, where you are highly

* Dr. St. George Ashe, formerly fellow and provost of the university of Dublin, and who had been Swift's tutor at Dublin-college. He was made bishop of Clogher, June 25, 1697, and translated to Derry, Feb. 27, 1716.

Digitized by Google

esteemed by Lady Warwick, and the young lord; though by none any where more than by,

SIR,

Your most faithful
and most obedient humble servant,

J. ADDISON.

Happy to have escaped the troubled ocean of politics, our author in the shades of retirement resumed with fresh eagerness his pen. Some years had elapsed since he commenced a Treatise on the Evidences of the Christian Religion; this he now returned to and continued, though, unfortunately for the public, life was not allowed him to complete his plan. What he executed was published after his death, and, though since superseded by more accurate and elaborate works, was then justly entitled to the praise of elegance and utility. He likewise meditated a version of the psalms, for which, from the specimens scattered through his works, we must allow him to have been eminently qualified.

It is to be lamented that Pope, forgetful of himself, and alone tenacious of resentment, has imputed these religious attempts to an improper motive, and has affirmed upon the authority of Tonson, who was then at variance with Addison, that our author, having holy orders in view, com-

Digitized by Google

posed these pieces in order to obtain a bishoprick; an aspersion equally vicious and improbable. Had Addison ever cherished such a design, he would have prepared for its completion whilst in power; and not in the hour of lassitude and retirement, when neither health nor influence were left him, have projected a scheme which would have plunged him in duties so awful and responsible, and which was to have been effected by means so apparently inadequate. They were, in fact, the proper occupations of a man who, tired of the busy world, and labouring under complaints which might soon terminate his life, thought it necessary to employ the time yet allotted him on subjects of the highest moment—in establishing the truth of that religion whose promises he now felt to be his only consolation, and in preparing for that change in existence which might shortly conduct him to his God.

Serious and important as were these studies, our author yet found leisure and inclination for the enjoyments of literature and imagination. About this period was performed at Drury-lane Theatre the only Comedy that he ever wrote, entitled, *The Drummer*, or *Haunted House;* which, though never acknowledged by Addison himself, is well known, both by internal evidence and the testimony of

Digitized by Google

Sir Richard Steele, to have been entirely his composition. After meeting with a cool reception on the stage, Steele, who had recommended it to the manager, published it without a name, and sold the copy-right for fifty guineas. It is highly probable, that had *The Drummer* been received with applause, its author would readily have owned it; but chagrined at its want of success on the Theatre, and conscious that it deserved a different fate, he chose it should appeal to other and better judges, resting entirely on its own merits, and therefore without the protection of a name.

It is not known whether Addison lived to hear the opinion of the public fairly expressed. While the author remained concealed it was probably little read, and only valued by those few who judge for themselves unbiassed by adventitious circumstances, and whose opinions it is, necessarily, difficult to collect. That some doubt as to its authenticity hung upon the mind of Tickell is evident from his not including it in his edition of our author's works published in 1721: an omission which gave such offence to Sir Richard Steele, that he immediately brought forward a second edition of the play, prefixing an epistle to Mr. Congreve, in which, after many pertinent observations, he remarks, 'they who

Digitized by Google

shall read this play, after being let into the secret that it was written by Mr. Addison, will probably be attentive to those excellencies which they before overlooked, and wonder they did not till now observe, that there is not an expression in the whole piece, which has not in it the most nice propriety and aptitude to the character which utters it; there is that smiling mirth, that delicate satire and genteel raillery which appeared in Mr. Addison when he was free among intimates; I say when he was free from his remarkable bashfulness, which is a cloak which hides and muffles merit; and his abilities were covered only by modesty, which doubles the beauties which are seen, and gives credit and esteem to all that are concealed. The Drummer made no great figure on the stage, though exquisitely well acted; but when I observe this, I say a much harder thing of the stage than of the comedy. When I say the stage in this place, I am understood to mean in general the present taste of theatrical representations, where nothing that is not violent, and as I may say grossly delightful, can come on without hazard of being condemned or slighted."

Such is the authority of a name which has once attained celebrity, that when *The Drummer* was certainly known to have been written by

Digitized by Google

Addison, it was again brought forward at Covent-garden, and, though much worse acted than when it first appeared on the boards of Drury-lane, was received with unmingled applause.

It has not, however, kept its station as an acting play; nor is it, from its want of rapid incident and high-charged character (now much too prevalent on our stage,) likely to be soon revived. In the closet, notwithstanding, it must ever charm the man of taste, and Steele has well described, in the passage that I have quoted, its great and peculiar merit. The characters do not step beyond the modesty of truth, and the happily-conceived humour which pervades every scene, and which stamps it as the production of Addison, though not coarse enough to excite the roar of vulgar merriment, will be highly relished by every individual who possesses a refined judgment, and a knowledge of the human heart. The figures in the foreground are those of *Vellum* and *Tinsel* which are admirably managed and opposed; the elaborate dullness of the former, and the sceptical pertness of the latter, together with the ridiculous apprehensions of the domestics, are genuine draughts from nature, and can never fade.

It is greatly to be regretted, that the last employment of the pen of Addison should have originated in political dissension. The contro-

Digitized by Google

versy concerning the *Peerage Bill*, which we have fully detailed in the life of Steele, though supported with much ability on both sides, and throwing considerable light on the nature and fabric of our constitution, every admirer of our author and his amiable friend would wish to have seen placed in other hands. It is painful in the extreme to behold a friendship so cemented by time and mutual good offices, and further strengthened by a literary co-partnership most memorable in the annals of our literature, broken in the decline of life, and when one of the parties trembled on the verge of the grave, by a contest so productive of acrimony. But let us censure the frailties of genius with awe; and reflect, that if men gifted as these were with uncommon powers of intellect, and acknowledged sweetness of disposition, could, after a life of cordial co-operation, thus burst asunder the bonds of habitual endearment, and on a subject so distant from all moral and domestic feeling, how cautious should inferior mortals be, lest that which gives its charm to life should perish instantly in our grasp and mock the growth of years.

The observation is a gloomy, but, I am afraid, a just one, that the labour of love, the affection and the friendship which time and assiduity have produced, are too often lost for ever by an expression of anger or contempt, by thoughtless

Digitized by Google

mirth or inadvertent opposition. A great portion of the misery of this world arises from the omission of those little attentions and kindnesses which bespeak the heart engaged. An enormous crime will occasionally, like some dreadful explosion, annihilate at once our hopes; but this is an event of rare occurrence, while the operations of neglect, indifference, or contempt, daily and hourly sap the foundations of human happiness.

There is every reason to suppose, however, as I have already observed in the life of Steele, that the breach between these illustrious friends was healed before their final separation. Addison possessed an affectionate heart, and seldom suffered politics to interrupt, even for the shortest period, a well-grounded attachment. For Dean Swift, though a zealous Tory, and the able leader of the opposite party, he cherished to the close of life a most sincere regard. His last letter to the Dean, written but a few months previous to his death, is a strong and very amiable proof of the durability of his friendship, and of the liberality of the principles on which it was founded.

DEAR SIR, Bristol, Oct. 1, 1718.

I HAVE received the honour of your letter at Bristol, where I have just finished a course of water-drinking, which, I hope, has pretty well

Digitized by Google

recovered me from the leavings of my last winter's sickness. As for the subject of your letter, though you know an affair of that nature cannot well, nor safely, be trusted in writing, I desired a friend of mine to acquaint SIR RALPH GORE, that I was, by a pre-engagement, and not at my own choice, to act in it; and have since troubled my Lady Ashe with a letter to the same effect, which I hope has not miscarried. However, upon my return to London, I will farther enquire into that matter, and see if there is any room left me to negotiate as you propose.

I still live in hopes of seeing you in England; and if you would take my house at Bilton in your way, (it lies upon the road, within a mile of Rugby) I would strive hard to meet you there, provided you would make me happy in your company for some days. The greatest pleasure I have met with for some months, is in the conversation of my old friend Dr. Smalridge, who, since the death of the excellent man you mention,* is to me the most candid and agreeable of all bishops; I would say, clergymen, were not deans comprehended under that title. We have often talked of you; and when I assure you he has an exquisite taste of writing, I need not tell you how he talks on such a subject. I look upon it as

* Dr. Ashe, Bishop of Derry.

Digitized by Google

my good fortune, that I can express my esteem of you even to those who are not of the bishop's party, without giving offence. When a man has so much compass in his character, he affords his friends topics enough to enlarge upon, that all sides admire. I am sure, a zealous friendly behaviour distinguishes you as much as your many more shining talents; and as I have received particular instances of it, you must have a very bad opinion of me, if you do not think I heartily love and respect you; and that I ever am,

DEAR SIR,

Your most obedient,

and most humble servant,

J. ADDISON.

That he suffered no enmity to linger on his mind, and left no injury unatoned for during the long period of indisposition which preceded his death, is apparent from his conduct to Gay. To this amiable poet he sent a message by the Earl of Warwick, requesting that he might see him as soon as possible. Gay immediately attended, and was received by Addison, whom he had not seen for a length of time, with the greatest kindness and affection. The intention of the interview was then disclosed: "I have injured you," said Addison, "but will endeavour, should I

Digitized by Google

recover, to recompense you." The nature of the injury was not mentioned; yet Gay supposed that he might allude to some place which government had in view for him, but which, through Addison's interference, had never been bestowed.

The asthmatic disorder, to which he had been long subject, now terminated in a dropsy; and it became evident to himself, and to all around him, that the hour of his dissolution could not be far distant. The death-bed of Addison was the triumph of religion and virtue. Reposing on the merits of his Redeemer, and conscious of a life well spent in the service of his fellow-creatures, he waited with tranquillity and resignation the moment of departure. The dying accents of the virtuous man have frequently, when other means have failed, produced the happiest effect; and Addison, anxious that a scene so awful might make its due impression, demanded the attendance of his son-in-law, Lord Warwick. This young nobleman was amiable, but dissipated; and Addison, for whom he still retained a high respect, had often, though in vain, endeavoured to correct his principles, and to curb the impetuosity of his passions. He now required his attendance to behold the reward of him who had obeyed his God. "He came," says Dr. Young, who first related this affecting circumstance; "but life now

Digitized by Google

glimmering in the socket, the dying friend was silent; after a decent and proper pause, the youth said, 'Dear sir! you sent for me: I believe, I hope that you have some commands; I shall hold them most sacred.' May distant ages not only hear, but feel, the reply! Forcibly grasping the youth's hand, he softly said, 'SEE IN WHAT PEACE A CHRISTIAN CAN DIE.' He spoke with difficulty, and soon expired." *

This truly great and good man died on June 17th, 1719, at Holland House, near Kensington: on the 26th of the same month he lay in state in the Jerusalem-chamber, and was afterwards buried in Westminster-abbey.

About a month previous to his decease he made his will, of which the following is a correct copy extracted from the registry of the prerogative court of Canterbury.

"In the name of God, Amen. I Joseph Addison, now of the parish of Kensington, in the county of Middlesex, Esq. being of sound and disposing mind and memory, yet considering the

* Young's Works, vol. v. p. 136, 12mo edition. Tickell told Dr. Young, that in the following couplet of his Elegy on the Death of Addison, he alluded to this interview with the Earl of Warwick:

He taught us how to live; and, oh! too high
The price of knowledge, taught us how to die—

Digitized by Google

uncertainty of this mortal life, do think it necessary to make and ordain this my last will and testament; which is as followeth. Imprimis: I give and bequeath unto my dear and loving wife the Countess of Warwick and Holland, her heirs, executors, and assigns, all and singular my real and personal estate whatsoever and wheresover, of which I am now seized or possessed, or entitled unto; upon this condition, that my said dear wife shall, out of my said estates, pay, within half a year after my decease, the sum of five hundred pounds to my sister, Mrs. Combes; and the yearly sum of fifty pounds to my mother, now living at Coventry, during her life, by half-yearly payments, viz. at Michaelmas and Lady-day; the first of the said payments to be made at the first of the said feasts that shall happen next after my decease. And I do make and ordain my said dear wife executrix of this my last will: and I do also appoint her to be guardian of my dear child, Charlotte Addison, until she shall attain her age of one and twenty; being well assured that she will take due care of her education and maintenance, and provide for her in case she live to be married. Item, I do hereby revoke all former wills by me made. In witness whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and seal, this

Digitized by Google

fourteenth day of May, in the fifth year of the reign of our Sovereign Lord King George, and in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and nineteen.

JOSEPH ADDISON."

Of the relations mentioned in this will, Mrs. Combes, the only sister of Addison, died on March 2d, 1750, and, it is said, left, after some legacies, her estate for the erection of a monument to Mr. Addison in Westminster-abbey. *

Of Charlotte Addison, who died unmarried in 1797, the following accounts are extracted from that excellent repository of information, the Gentleman's Magazine.

"At Bilton, near Rugby, in Warwickshire, died Miss Addison, only surviving daughter of the celebrated Joseph Addison, Esq. born just before his death, in 1718, by Sarah, Countess Dowager of Warwick, daughter of Thomas Dashwood, Esq. Alderman of London. Miss Addison was buried at Bilton, on the 10th of March. Many years since, she made her last will in favour of the third son of Lord Bradford, who now comes in for

* See the Gentleman's Magazine for March, 1750. Either this must be a mistake, however, or the will was never carried into execution.

Digitized by Google

her estate. There are left at her house at Bilton several portraits of Mr. Addison and his friends, and his library, which, it is presumed, contains many valuable books and manuscripts.* She inherited her father's memory, but none of the discriminating powers of his understanding; with the retentive faculties of Jedediah Buxton, she was a perfect imbecile. She could go on in any part of her father's works, or repeat the whole, but was incapable of speaking or writing an intelligible sentence." †

This relation, which involves some errors of consequence, was ably corrected, in a subsequent number, by a person who seems to have drawn his materials from a very authentic source.

"Looking into your obituary," this correspondent observes, "I saw an account of Miss Addison, the daughter of the author of the Spectator. The circumstances that relate to her family are certainly very erroneous. The Countess her

* About two years after this account was written, the library of Mr. Addison was sent to town for sale; it was divided into eight hundred and fifty-six lots, and sold by Messrs. Leigh and Sotheby on the 27th of May, 1799, and the three following days, for the sum of 456*l.* 2*s.* 9*d.* The medals and jewels, which were disposed of on the fifth day, produced the sum of 97*l.* 2*s.* 2*d.*

† Gentleman's Magazine, March, 1797.

Digitized by Google

mother's christian name was *Charlotte*, and the father of the Countess was Sir Thomas Middleton of Chirk Castle, Denbighshire; and her mother's surname was Bridgman. The Countess was an only daughter. Miss Addison was born in London, and was twelve years old when the Countess died; was educated at a school in Queen's-square, and afterwards had a house of her own in Burlington-street. Perhaps the report which you have given in your useful miscellany, about the strength of her memory, and the weakness of her understanding, is almost as wide from the truth as the account of her family. I have not conversed very frequently with her: but enough to be convinced that her memory, though good, was not so extraordinary as is represented. I have heard her repeat some of the poetical parts of the Spectator, which she did with considerable accuracy of memory, and great propriety of emphasis. But I do not believe that she could have repeated one prose paper out of all her father's works. She could have given an account of the contents of many. She read them frequently. I have been told that she spoke French with fluency; and a person who had opportunities of observing, informed me that she spelt it with correctness. She was very deaf; but when she

Digitized by Google

could hear the questions which were put to her, she answered them with sound judgment and a steady recollection. So far is it from being true that she could not write or speak a single sentence intelligibly, that I am persuaded she could do both as well as the generality of other people. It is true, that she was in no respect to be compared with her father in point of understanding; but how few are those that can admit of such a comparison? It is by no means true, that she was an *imbecile*, or such a prodigy of memory. Her memory was strong, but not marvellous; her understanding was good, but not particularly great. It was beneath admiration, and far above contempt. It must not be dissembled, that it was at intervals clouded, but not for any great continuance of time; and perhaps she possessed her faculties in the extreme period of her life, as well, and as fully, as in any of the former." *

Our author having previously given directions to Mr. Tickell relative to the publication of his works, dedicated them, *on his death-bed*, to his friend Mr. Craggs, in the following impressive letter, which is rendered still more interesting by the circumstance of this friend dying before they could be published.

* Gentleman's Magazine, May, 1797.

Digitized by Google

TO THE

RIGHT HONOURABLE JAMES CRAGGS, ESQ.

His Majesty's Principal Secretary of State.

DEAR SIR,

I CANNOT wish that any of my writings should last longer than the memory of our friendship; and therefore I thus publicly bequeath them to you, in return for the many valuable instances of your affection.

That they may come to you with as little disadvantage as possible, I have left the care of them to one whom, by the experience of some years, I know well qualified to answer my intentions. He has already the honour and happiness of being under your protection; and, as he will very much stand in need of it, I cannot wish him better than that he may continue to deserve the favour and countenance of such a patron.

I have no time to lay out in forming such compliments as would but ill suit that familiarity between us which was once my greatest pleasure, and will be my greatest honour hereafter. Instead of them, accept my hearty wishes, that the great reputation you have acquired so early may increase more and more; and that you may long serve your country with those excellent talents, and unblemished integrity, which have so

Digitized by Google

powerfully recommended you to the most gracious and amiable monarch that ever filled a throne. May the frankness and generosity of your spirit continue to soften and subdue your enemies, and gain you many friends, if possible, as sincere as yourself. When you have found such, they cannot wish you more true happiness than I, who am, with the greatest zeal,

DEAR SIR,

Your most entirely affectionate friend,
and faithful obedient servant,

J. ADDISON.

Tickell's edition was printed in the year 1721, in four volumes quarto, and includes some pieces which never reached the press in the author's life-time.

Among these, the most valuable and extensive is the *Dialogue on Ancient Medals;* for which, though not published until after his death, he had been very assiduous in collecting materials whilst in Italy, and had even commenced their arrangement during his residence at Vienna, in 1702. This work is a beautiful and correct imitation of the style and manner of Plato; nor has it, in these respects, with the exception, perhaps, in favour of the Treatises of Harris, been surpassed by any posterior attempt. "There are

Digitized by Google

in English three dialogues, and but three," says the Critic of Salisbury, "that deserve commendation; namely, the Moralists in Lord Shaftesbury, Mr. Addison's Treatise on Medals, and the Minute Philosophy of Bishop Berkeley." The purport of Addison's dialogue is to point out the utility and importance of the study of medals, and to prove that various obscure parts of history, chronology, biography, and poetry have been, and may be, elucidated by a learned inspection of these elegant reliques.

The intimacy of Addison with the Latin poets is no where more conspicuous than in this production, where almost every figure is illustrated by some appropriate poetical quotation. Its principal defect is the assumption of fictitious, instead of real, persons for the speakers; a plan which necessarily deprives us of the interest attached to great and national characters, and which the ancients took care to avoid, by regularly introducing as interlocutors their most celebrated warriors, legislators, and philosophers. "It is somewhat singular," observes Dr. Warton, "that so many of the modern dialogue-writers should have failed in this particular, when so many of the most celebrated wits of modern Italy had given them eminent examples of the contrary proceeding, and, closely following the steps of the

Digitized by Google

ancients, constantly introduced living and real persons in their numerous compositions of this sort; in which they were so fond of delivering their sentiments, both on moral and critical subjects; witness the Il Cortegiano of B. Castiglione, the Asolani of P. Bembo, Dialoghi del S. Sperone, and the great Galileo, the Naugerius of Fracastorius, and Lil. Gyraldus de Poetis, and many others. In all which pieces, the famous and living geniuses of Italy, are introduced discussing the several different topics before them." *

Of the manners and habits of a man who filled so large a space in the public eye, and who contributed so much to the improvement of our literature and morals, it is to be lamented that little satisfactory can now be told. Had Steele fulfilled the promise which he made to Congreve, of presenting the world with a full length of the character of his friend, there is every reason to sup-

* Warton's Pope, vol. iii. p. 302. Since the appearance of Tickell's edition, two pieces have been published separately, and ascribed to Addison. The first in 12mo in Latin and English, and entitled *Dissertatio de insignioribus Romanorum Poetis. A Dissertation upon the most eminent Roman Poets*; and, in 1739, appeared an octavo, printed for T. Osborne, from a manuscript formerly in the possession of Lord Somers, under the title of *A Discourse on ancient and modern Learning.* These tracts are not destitute of merit, but there is no sufficient authority for attributing them to the pen of our author.

Digitized by Google

pose, from the intimacy which subsisted between them, that we should have beheld a portrait of Addison nearly as correct as those which we possess of Johnson and of Cowper. Steele, however, unhappily, wanted either time or resolution to carry his purpose into effect; and we are left to glean, from very scanty sources, a few of those peculiarities of his familiar life, which, could they have been more amply unfolded, would strongly have individualized the picture.

The circumstance which Addison has selected as peculiarly characteristic of himself is his taciturnity. This, which his friends attributed to modesty, was rather the effect of a painful and unconquerable bashfulness; and although he has made it the subject of much humorous raillery, when speaking of himself, in company where he was not absolutely familiar, it completely veiled, under the appearance of sullenness or incapacity, the most solid and engaging talents.

Were we to sketch his manners in society, from the representation of those who were only casually admitted into his company, and for whom he entertained little either of respect or regard, we should present not a likeness but a caricature. Chesterfield has described him as the most timorous and *awkward* man he ever saw; and Dr. Mandeville, the author of the *Fables of the Bees*,

Digitized by Google

after spending an evening with him at Lord Macclesfield's, exclaimed, "He is a parson in a tye wig."

Neither Chesterfield nor Mandeville were, however, characters which Addison could in any degree approve. The former founded all excellence on exterior accomplishments, and on the arts of dissimulation; whilst the latter, void of religion, was, from the tenor of his works, even the professed friend of luxury and vice. Before such men it was not to be expected that our author should relax into confidence and familiarity; it was his duty, on the contrary, to be silent and reserved, and to maintain that severity of manner which drew forth the foolish sarcasm of Mandeville.

Though Addison has himself declared, alluding to his mental riches, that he could draw bills for a thousand pounds, though he had not a guinea in his pocket, he can only be understood as referring to a want of facility in conversation, when in the presence of strangers. Among his intimate friends, among those whom he loved and esteemed, he often delivered himself with a fluency and propriety which excited the warmest admiration of his auditors. Steele, who possessed frequent opportunities of witnessing his conversational powers, affirms, that "he was above all men in that talent called humour, and enjoyed

Digitized by Google

it in such perfection, that I have often reflected, after a night spent with him apart from all the world, that I had had the pleasure of conversing with an intimate acquaintance of Terence and Catullus, who had all their wit and nature, heightened with humour more exquisite and delightful than any other man ever possessed." * Even Pope, a rival, rather than a friend, and who never seems to have entertained any very cordial regard for our author, has done justice to his merits as an interesting and delightful companion. "Addison's conversation," says he, "had something in it more charming than I have found in any other man. But this was only when familiar; before strangers he preserved his dignity by a stiff silence."

Of his modes or peculiarities in composition, we know little more than that he wrote rapidly and with facility, but was slow and scrupulous in correcting. According to Sir Richard Steele, the last act of his Cato was written in less than a week's time. "For this," continues he, "was particular in this writer, that when he had taken his resolution, or made his plan for what he designed to write, he would walk about a room, and dictate it into language with as much freedom

* Epistle to Mr. Congreve, prefixed to the Drummer, 2d edit. 4to. 1722.

Digitized by Google

and ease as any one could write it down, and attend to the coherence and grammar of what he dictated.* Many of his Spectators, it is said on the authority of Pope, were written with great rapidity, and immediately transmitted to the press; nor, after they had passed that ordeal, with an exception as to typographical errors, would he deign to make any alteration. "He would alter," says the Bard of Twickenham, "any thing to please his friends, before publication; but would not retouch his piece afterwards; and I believe not one word in Cato, to which I made an objection, was suffered to stand."†

His quickness of invention and prompt choice of words will receive some illustration from the following epigram, which was written by him extempore when a member of the Kit Cat Club: to sprightliness of thought it adds accuracy of composition:

ON THE LADY MANCHESTER.

When haughty Gallia's dames, that spread
O'er their pale cheeks an artful red,
Beheld this beauteous stranger there,
In native charms divinely fair;
Confusion in their looks they show'd,
And with unborrow'd blushes glow'd. ‡

* Dedication of the Drummer, p. 16.

† On the authority of Spence.

‡ Vide Dryden's Miscellanies, vol. v. p. 91.

Digitized by Google

Johnson, on the authority of Pope and Spence, has thus recorded the familiar day of Addison, previous to his marriage. "He had in the house with him Budgell, and perhaps Phillips. His chief companions were Steele, Budgell, Phillips, Carey, Davenant, and Colonel Brett. With one or other of these he always breakfasted. He studied all morning; then dined at a tavern; and went afterwards to Button's.

"Button had been a servant in the Countess of Warwick's family, who, under the patronage of Addison, kept a coffee-house on the south-side of Russel-street, about two doors from Covent-garden. Here it was that the wits of that time used to assemble. It is said, when Addison had suffered any vexation from the Countess, he withdrew the company from Button's house.

"From the coffee-house he went again to a tavern, where he often sat late, and drank too much wine. In the bottle," continues the doctor, "discontent seeks for comfort, cowardice for courage, and bashfulness for confidence. It is not unlikely, that Addison was first seduced to excess by the manumission which he obtained from the servile timidity of his sober hours. He that feels oppression from the presence of those to whom he knows himself superior, will desire to set loose his powers of conversation; and who,

Digitized by Google

that ever asked succours from Bacchus, was able to preserve himself from being enslaved by his auxiliary." *

Though it cannot be denied, that with a view to dispel the conscious sense of timidity, Addison sometimes had recourse to the assistance of the bottle, there is every reason to believe that, anterior to his union with the Countess of Warwick, this application was not frequent, and seldom passed the bounds of moderation. Steele, who best knew the familiar habits of his friend, has in the Tatler, when speaking of the utility of wine to the bashful, drawn a portrait of our author which strongly corroborates this idea. "I have the good fortune," says he, "to be intimate with a gentleman remarkable for this temper, (namely, bashfulness,) who has an inexhaustible source of wit, to entertain the curious, the grave, the humorous, and the frolic. He can transform himself into different shapes, and adapt himself to every company; yet in a coffee-house, or in the ordinary course of affairs, he appears rather dull than sprightly. *You can seldom get him to the tavern; but when once he is arrived to his pint*, and begins to look about and like his company, you admire a thousand things in him, which before lay buried. Then you discern the

* Lives of the Poets, vol. ii. p. 110.

Digitized by Google

brightness of his mind, and the strength of his judgment, accompanied with the most graceful mirth. In a word, by this enlivening aid, he is whatever is polite, instructive, and diverting. What makes him still more agreeable is, that he tells a story, serious or comical, with as much delicacy of humour as Cervantes himself." *

It was only after his connection with a woman who knew not the value of his character and talents, and who was little anxious concerning his domestic comforts, that he retreated from discontent and vexation to the pleasures or oblivion of the bottle. A mind depressed and disappointed usually requires a greater quantity of stimulus to produce a given effect, than under more fortunate circumstances; and it is probably to this period that we may apply the anecdote recorded in a late edition of the Tatler, that Steele, who had a better constitution than his friend, and who could, without much injury to himself, drink a great deal, and generally drank too much, was, not seldom, in danger of being past conversing before he could drink Addison up to his conversation pitch.

"A canker in the root of domestic society," observes an ingenious annotator on the Tatler, "must necessarily create such sensible and ex-

* Tatler, No. 252.

Digitized by Google

tensive uneasiness, as embitters all the pleasures, and aggravates all the sorrows of life. It is, therefore, probable, that Addison's elevation to the department of secretary of state, *which was subsequent to his marriage*, made no accession to his credit, or to his happiness. Whether it was that his talents were not suited to this employment, or that he was too scrupulous in composition for the dispatch of business, or whether at that time the duty of the place was too complex and cumbersome for so weakly a constitution, it is certain he sat very late at his office; and that there, and at Button's, he shortened his life and his sorrows, by an immoderate use of Canary wine and Barbadoes water. This annotator has been informed, that Jacob Tonson boasted of paying his court, not unsuccessfully, by inventing excuses for requesting a glass of the last mentioned liquor, in order to furnish the secretary with an opportunity, and an apology, for indulging his own inclination."*

Let it be remembered, however, that in seeking the transient relief which wine affords, it is not known that Addison ever degraded himself by intoxication. His constitution and depression of spirits were such, that, towards the latter part of his life, what would be deemed a large quan-

* Tatler, vol. iv. p. 300. Note, edit. 8vo. 1797.

tity of wine for others, was barely sufficient to produce in him the grateful feelings of exhilaration. He then, forgetting his domestic sorrows and his public cares, became a lively, an entertaining, and instructive companion; and if ever the effects of liquor could be praised for their influence, they were entitled to such praise in the person of Mr. Addison. The resource, however, though never carried to the length of inebriety, was attended with its customary bad result to happiness and health. He who depends on such an ally will, ere long, find himself deserted and betrayed; and the symptoms which accompanied the decline of Mr. Addison's health were such as clearly to indicate that it had suffered through the means employed for mental relief.

That Addison greatly excelled in conversation among his intimate friends we have already related; he was, likewise, fond of argument, which he conducted with much skill, coolness, and urbanity. He loved to encounter a powerful and well-conducted opposition, and was offended if any one, from a sense of obligation to him, or deference, forbore to support his opinion. An anecdote recorded by Dr. Birch places this in a striking light. Mr. Temple Stanyan, who had long lived with Addison in habits of friendship, conversing on all subjects with perfect freedom,

Digitized by Google

borrowed of him on some exigency a sum of money; from this time Mr. Stanyan agreed implicitly to every thing that Addison advanced, and never, as formerly, disputed his positions. This change of behaviour did not long escape the notice of so acute an observer, to whom it was by no means agreeable. It happened one day that a subject was started, on which they had before keenly controverted one another's notions; but now, Mr. Stanyan entirely acquiesced in Addison's opinion, without offering one word in defence of his own. Addison was displeased, and vented his displeasure, by saying with some emotion, "Sir, either contradict me, or pay me my money."* It is related also by Swift, that when our author found any man invincibly wrong, he would flatter his opinions by acquiescence, and sink him yet deeper in absurdity. This artifice of mischief, observes Johnson, was admired by Stella; and Swift seems to approve her admiration.†

It is the lot of few men to obtain the praise they merit during life; envy, jealousy, or party zeal, too generally intervene to derogate from the fame of him who aspires to public approbation. Addison was, however, peculiarly fortu-

* Birch's Biograph. MSS. Brit. Museum.

† Lives of the Poets, vol. ii. p. 111.

Digitized by Google

nate; though filling an elevated situation under government, though standing foremost in the ranks of literature, and in times too when political parties were uncommonly violent, his moral and intellectual character not only attained the highest lustre and applause, but remained to the last hour of his life unsullied by the breath of faction, and unassailed by the shafts of calumny. No vice of any kind could be attributed to him; and such were his acknowledged merits and popularity, that Swift, in a letter to Stella, dated October the 12th, 1710, when speaking of Addison's election, which he observes had passed easy and undisputed, adds "and, I believe, if he had a mind to be chosen king, he would hardly be refused."

No one more than the Dean of St. Patrick had reason to estimate highly the character and political forbearance of Addison; for though, after his secession from the Whig interest, he became the head and very life of the opposite party, he never experienced reproach or enmity from our author. On the contrary, when Addison was appointed secretary in Ireland, he firmly refused to drop his acquaintance with the dean, but continued to him his accustomed friendship through all the storms of political revolution. That Swift felt grateful for this conduct; that he had the

Digitized by Google

sincerest regard for Addison, and entertained apprehensions which were however never realized, of losing his affection, are evident from the following passage addressed to Stella, in December 1710.—"Mr. Addison and I," he says, "are different as black and white; and I believe our friendship will go off by this damned business of party: he cannot bear seeing me fall in so with this ministry; but I love him still as well as ever, though we seldom meet."

The liberality and moderation of Addison with regard to politics were the theme of just applause among his contemporaries; and it would have been fortunate for the dean's character and peace of mind, had he imbibed some portion of these useful virtues. While the doctor deserted his party, to embrace with intemperate zeal the politics of the reigning ministry, Addison, on principle, remained a Whig through life; while the former by his dereliction and violence incurred obloquy and hatred, the latter by his firmness and integrity retained to the very last, not merely the approbation of his friends, but the admiration even of his opponents.

In private as in public life the morality of Addison was deemed exemplary. To a temper remarkably mild and sweet, were added the virtues of justice, benevolence, and charity. His

Digitized by Google

passions never obscured his judgment, nor was his religion tainted with bigotry or superstition. When Whiston was expelled the university of Cambridge for his scepticism with regard to the doctrine of the trinity, Addison, in conjunction with his friend Sir Richard Steele, contributed to the comfortable support of him and his family, by procuring numerous benefactors to his astronomical lectures.* The following letter, likewise, written by our author on receiving certain hints, which it was impossible to misunderstand, from a married lady, the wife of his friend, will bear ample testimony to the purity of his conduct, and to his powers of resisting one of the strongest temptations to which our nature is subject.

"MADAM,

"It would be ridiculous in me, after the late intimation you were pleased to favour me with, to affect any longer, an ignorance of your sentiments, however opposite an approbation of them must be to the dictates of reason and justice. This expression I am sensible may appear inconsistent in the mouth of a *polite* man, but I hope it is no disgrace to a *sincere* one. In matters of

* Vide Whiston's Memoirs of his own Life and Writings, p. 257, 258.

Digitized by Google

importance, *delicacy* ought to give way to *truth*, and *ceremony* must be sacrificed to *candour*. An honest freedom is the privilege of ingenuity; and the mind, which is above the practice of deceit, can never stoop to be guilty of flattery upon such a point.

"Give me leave, madam, to remark, that the connection subsisting between your husband and myself is of a nature too strong for me to think of injuring him in a point where the happiness of his life is so materially concerned. You cannot be insensible of his goodness or my obligations; and suffer me to observe, that, were I capable of such an action, how much soever my behaviour might be rewarded by your *passion*, I must be despised by your *reason*, and, though I might be esteemed as a lover, I should be hated as a man. Highly sensible of the power of your beauty, I am determined to avoid an interview where my peace and honour may be for ever lost.—You have passions, you say, madam; give me leave to answer, you have understanding also; you have a heart susceptible of the tenderest impressions, but a soul, if you would choose to awaken it, beyond an unwarrantable indulgence of them; and let me intreat you, for your own sake, to resist any giddy impulse or ill-placed inclination which shall induce you to entertain

a thought prejudicial to your own honour, and repugnant to your virtue.

"I too, madam, am far from being insensible. I too have passions; and would my situation, a few years ago, have allowed me a possibility of succeeding, I should legally have solicited that happiness which you are now ready to bestow. I had the honour of supping at Mr. D.'s, where I first saw you; and I shall make no scruple in declaring, that I never saw a person so irresistibly beautiful, nor a manner so excessively engaging; but the superiority of your circumstances prevented any declaration on my side, although I burnt with a flame as strong as ever fired the human breast. I laboured to conceal it. Time and absence at length abated a hopeless passion, and your marriage with my patron effectually cured it. Do not, madam, endeavour to rekindle that flame; do not destroy a tranquillity I have just begun to taste, and blast your own honour, which has been hitherto unsullied. My best esteem is yours; but should I promise more, consider the fatal necessity I should be under of removing myself from an intercourse so dangerous. In any other commands, dispose of

MADAM,

Your humble servant." *

* Vide Rede's Anecdotes, p. 6, 7, 8.

Digitized by Google

A character so pre-eminently good and wise must necessarily attach and preserve a multitude of friends; and accordingly few persons have been more revered and beloved by the great, the learned, and the virtuous, than the subject of our biography. Among the nobility also of his time, two of the most celebrated for their worth and talents, John Lord Somers and Charles Montagu earl of Halifax, were, we have seen, his most generous patrons. Lord Somers, remarks Mr. Walpole, was "one of those divine men, who, like a chapel in a palace, remain unprofaned, while all the rest is tyranny, corruption, and folly. All the traditional accounts of him, the historians of the last age, and its best authors, represent him, as the most incorrupt lawyer, and the honestest statesman, as a master orator, a genius of the finest taste, and as a patriot of the noblest and most extensive views; as a man, who dispensed blessings by his life, and planned them for posterity. He was at once the model of Addison, and the touchstone of Swift."*

Though such was the reputation of Addison during his life that scarce a shade of vice could be attributed to him, the malignant industry of succeeding times has endeavoured, by exaggerating a trivial dispute, to fix a stain upon his

* Catalogue of Royal and Noble Authors, vol. ii. p. 107, 2d edition.

Digitized by Google

memory. He has been accused of envy, jealousy, and malevolence in his conduct towards Mr. Pope, whose irritable temper, ever ready to convert slight, and perhaps indiscreet, circumstances into intentional insult and defiance, induced him to write, and, after the death of Addison, to publish, the following most severe lines, which, when their object no longer survived to defend himself, he had the audacity to present to the world as a faithful picture. The lines, if considered in a poetical view, are admirable; but, as they will be found in a great measure devoid of truth, can reflect nothing but dishonour on the man who wrote them.

Peace to all such! but were there one whose fires
True genius kindles, and fair fame inspires;
Blest with each talent, and each art to please,
And born to write, converse, and live with ease:
Should such a man, too fond to rule alone,
Bear, like the Turk, no brother near the throne,
View him with scornful, yet with jealous eyes,
And hate for arts that caus'd himself to rise;
Damn with faint praise, assent with civil leer,
And without sneering, teach the rest to sneer;
Willing to wound, and yet afraid to strike,
Just hint a fault, and hesitate dislike;
Alike reserv'd to blame, or to commend,
A tim'rous foe, and a suspicious friend;
Dreading even fools, by flatterers besieg'd,
And so obliging, that he ne'er obliged;

Digitized by Google

Like Cato, give his little senate laws,
And sit attentive to his own applause;
While wits and templars, every sentence raise,
And wonder with a foolish face of praise—
Who but must laugh, if such a man there be?
Who would not weep, if ATTICUS were he?*

Mr. Ruffhead in his life of Pope has attempted to substantiate this malignant accusation, by a detail of particulars calculated to throw the whole blame upon Mr. Addison, and to prove his having acted from motives of the basest kind. This partial narrative has been repeated by others, until the fair fame of Mr. Addison appeared likely to suffer irretrievable injury. At length, however, a gentleman fully adequate to the task stepped forward in his vindication, and almost completely rescued our amiable author from the fangs of malice. This very satisfactory and acute defence, which is now known to have been written by the celebrated Sir William Blackstone, and which first appeared in the second edition of the Biographia Britannica, it would be injustice to my subject and my readers not to insert.

"The quarrel between Mr. Addison and Mr. Pope," observes the judge, "like others of the same kind, would deservedly have fallen into

* Warton's Pope, vol. iv. p. 30.

oblivion, had it not been perpetuated by Mr. Pope's satyric muse. And the true grounds of it will probably never be cleared up to the entire satisfaction of the inquisitive public; as one of the parties had been dead many years before any of the particulars were divulged, and those which are now given us came only from Mr. Pope himself. For neither the Bishop of Gloucester himself, nor the digester of his materials, Mr. Ruffhead, could have any personal knowledge of the circumstances of that transaction.

"The first notice we find of it in print is in that bitter but elegant character of Atticus, which was written, we are told, in Mr. Addison's lifetime, and sent privately to him in manuscript in the year 1715; but was certainly not made public till two years after his death; was afterwards printed in Mr. Pope's Miscellanies; and finally ingrafted into his epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot in 1733. The cause is obscurely glanced at in his letters, and scraps of letters, published by Mr. Pope in his correspondence; was more openly avowed in Mr. Warburton's notes on the epistle to Arbuthnot, verse 193, which were published in 1752; and the whole was drawn up into a regular charge, by Mr. Ruffhead in his life of Mr. Pope, printed 1769.*

* Pages 184, 193, 8vo.

Digitized by Google

"The account given is shortly this: 'That Mr. Addison's and Mr. Pope's friendship commenced in 1713, and continued for some time with reciprocal esteem and affection; that during this period the translation of the Iliad was set on foot, and the subscription promoted by Mr. Addison; and on the other hand Mr. Pope defended his friend against the brutal attack of Dennis. At length Addison became jealous of Pope's genius, and encouraged Philips to asperse his character with respect to his political connections; and *soon after* his jealousy discovered itself by a very peculiar circumstance. For upon Pope's advising with Mr. Addison about altering the Rape of the Lock by inserting the machinery, he dissuaded him from so noble an improvement. That this circumstance first opened Mr. Pope's eyes with regard to the real character of his friend; and his suspicions were *soon after* confirmed by the publication of Mr. Tickell's translation of the first book of Homer, in opposition to Mr. Pope's, which he was fully convinced, from many odd concurring circumstances, was indeed Mr. Addison's own performance. That *this* occasioned an open breach between Mr. Addison and Mr. Pope, which Mr. Jervas and other common friends endeavoured to reconcile; but that Mr. Addison's unbecoming behaviour and

Digitized by Google

cool contempt, at an interview between them, attended by Sir Richard Steele and Mr. Gay, rendered a reconciliation impracticable. That Mr. Pope, while yet warm with this provocation, wrote the character abovementioned of Mr. Addison. That *about this time*, the Earl of Warwick, Mr. Addison's son-in-law, told Mr. Pope, that it was in vain to think of being well with his father, who was naturally a jealous man, and was hurt by Mr. Pope's superior talents in poetry to such a degree, that he had secretly encouraged Gildon to write something about Wycherly, in which he had taken occasion to abuse Mr. Pope and his family in a virulent manner; and that Mr. Addison paid him ten guineas as the wages of his scurrility. That the next morning, after he had received this information, he wrote Mr. Addison an expostulatory letter, in which he inclosed the verses containing his character; which had so good an affect upon him, that, from that period to the time of his death, he always treated Mr. Pope with civility, and (as he believed) with justice.'

" If this account, and especially the latter part of it, be founded in truth, Mr. Addison very justly deserved that severity with which his memory has been treated by Mr. Pope and his professed panegyrists. But in justice to a character so

Digitized by Google

amiable as that of Mr. Addison, now unable to vindicate himself, we may be allowed to suspend our belief of it, till the accusation is better proved; especially as it is evident from dates and facts, chiefly extant in Mr. Pope's own works, (but which his Biographer has strangely misplaced and confounded) that the account given by Mr. Ruffhead cannot possibly be altogether true, and is hardly accurate in a single particular.

"It may be doubted whether the acquaintance between Addison and Pope did not commence as early as 1712. For Steele promised to bring them acquainted in February 1711-12.* And we find Mr. Addison, in October, 1712,† warmly recommending Mr. Pope to the world as a rising genius; and in the succeeding month advising his publication of the Temple of Fame.‡ This acquaintance was probably improved into friendship by Mr. Pope's writing the prologue to Cato, in April 1713. And as in the same year 1713, the improved edition of the Rape of the Lock was published,§ Mr. Addison's supposed advice, discouraging the proposed alterations, must

* Additions to Pope's Works, vol. ii. p. 112.

† Spectator, No. 523.

‡ Letters to Steele, Nov. 16, 1712.

§ Notes on the Lock, ver. i. Trumbull's Letter, 6th March, 1713. Dean Berkeley's, 1st of May, 1714.

Digitized by Google

therefore have been given in the very infancy, and not at the close of their friendship. If he gave such advice, it was probably his real opinion. He might think it dangerous to tamper with so beautiful a poem as the original, and had perhaps no conception of the art and ingenuity with which Mr. Pope was able to interweave the machinery, without breaking the unity of design. It is not suggested that Mr. Addison disliked the improvement when made, or dissuaded him from publishing the poem in such its improved state; which might have been a reasonable ground of suspicion. But so trifling a circumstance as the difference of opinion upon the propriety of the hint when first started, could never be of itself sufficient to open Mr. Pope's eyes, and mark Mr. Addison's character as a compound of meanness and jealousy.

" Indeed, it is plain that Mr. Pope at the time thought otherwise, or else was himself insincere. He drew his pen in defence of Cato in 1713, by writing a Narration of John Dennis's Frenzy, contrary to the wish of Mr. Addison (who disapproved so illiberal an attack, and published it, though against his consent.* And his letters to Mr. Addison in October, November, December,

* Pope to Addison, 30th July, 1713. Steele to Lintot, 4th Aug. 1713. Additions, vol. ii. p. 104.

Digitized by Google

and January following (which must have been written after his eyes had thus said to have been opened; are full of the strongest expressions of friendship and confidence. He then intrusted to this man (whose jealousy he perceived had been raised by the very mention of the sylphs and the gnomes) his original design of translating and commenting upon Homer. Mr. Addison (who it seems did not think Achilles half so formidable as Ariel in the hands of his poetical rival) received this design with great warmth of encouragement, and he was the first whose advice determined Mr. Pope to undertake that task.* He also pressed him to turn it to the best pecuniary advantage, and for that purpose to avoid engaging in any party disputes, into which he feared he might be drawn by his intimacy with Dr. Swift, and the attention paid him by many of the Tory ministry. The suspicions, if any, which Mr. Pope entertained of Mr. Addison's sincerity, from his advice about the Rape of the Lock, had surely by this time subsided; as indeed they might well do, if nothing happened to *confirm* them till the publication of Mr. Tickell's Homer, which, instead of being *soon*, was not till about two *years* after.

"In the mean time, a quarrel broke out

* Preface to Pope's Iliad.

Digitized by Google

tween Mr. Pope and Ambrose Philips, which involved Mr. Addison in its consequences, and put a period to the cordiality of their friendship. Stung with the reputation which Philips had acquired as a writer of pastorals, Pope wrote an ironical paper in the Guardian, April 27th, 1713, in ridicule of Philips. Mr. Addison immediately perceived the drift of it, and joined with Mr. Pope in the laugh; but Steele understood and published it as a serious panegyric upon his friend. When the jest was discovered, Philips seems to have been outrageously angry, and to have harboured a deep resentment. For in the spring of 1714, he took occasion to abuse Mr. Pope at Button's coffee-house as a Tory, and one united with Dr. Swift to write against the Whig interest, and undermine the reputation of himself, Steele, and Addison. Addison upon this came to Pope, and assured him of his disbelief of this idle story, and hoped their friendship would still continue.* Yet he seems to have been somewhat staggered in respect to Mr. Pope's party attachments, against which he had cautioned him more than once in the preceding year;† and a coolness certainly ensued, which continued for several months. During this

* Letter to the Hon. ———, 8th June, 1714.

† Letter, Nov. 3d, 1713.

Digitized by Google

estrangement, the interview mentioned by Mr. Ruffhead* is more likely to have happened than at the period in which he places it, the latter end of the year 1715, when in reality there was no rupture between them. Mr. Pope, it is confessed by his biographer, conducted himself at this interview with great impetuosity and warmth; and Mr. Addison, who was of a colder constitution, and much Mr. Pope's superior both in age and station, might possibly behave with too much *hauteur* and reserve. But that he harboured no malice against him, appears from his subsequent conduct.

"For the sudden revolution in politics that happened at the death of Queen Anne, and brought Mr. Addison and his friends into power and office, most certainly gave him an opportunity of mortifying, if not crushing, his competitor, in case he had been mean enough to wish it. On the contrary, from that instant he was inclined to forget all animosities, and offered his services, nay his interest at court, to Mr. Pope; † to which he returned a very waspish and disdainful answer: ‡ but however, in a few weeks

* Page 191.

† Letter from Jervas, 20th August, 1714.

‡ 27th August, 1714.

Digitized by Google

afterwards, Pope softened his tone, and wrote a more complaisant letter to Mr. Addison himself, yet mixed with some distrust and resentment.* Civilities upon this were again renewed between them; insomuch that, in April, 1715, we find Mr. Pope going to Mr. Jervas's, on purpose to meet Mr. Addison;† and in the same year he wrote his panegyrical epistle in verse, to be prefixed to Mr. Addison's Dialogues on Medals.

"At length the great and inexpiable offence was given by Mr. Addison to Mr. Pope, by permitting Mr. Tickell, his dependant, and afterwards his under-secretary, to publish a translation of the first book of the Iliad in the beginning of June, 1715, just at the time when the first volume of Mr. Pope's work was delivered to his subscribers. Whether this book was translated by Mr. Addison himself in his younger days, or whether he only revised and corrected Mr. Tickell's performance, cannot be pronounced with certainty, unless the public were in possession of those *odd concurring circumstances* which convinced Mr. Pope himself, that it was Mr. Addison's own translation, though he certainly thought otherwise when he penned the character of

* 10th of October, 1714.

† Gay to Congreve, 7th April, 1715.

Digitized by Google

Atticus.* To apologize for its publication at so critical a juncture, the following advertisement was prefixed by Mr. Tickell, though that circumstance was industriously suppressed in all Mr. Pope's publications on the subject: 'I must inform the reader, that when I began this first book, I had some thoughts of translating the whole Iliad; but I had the pleasure of being diverted from that design, by finding the work was fallen into a much abler hand. I would not therefore be thought to have any other view in publishing this small specimen of Homer's Iliad, than to bespeak (if possible) the favour of the public to a translation of Homer's Odyseis, wherein I have already made some progress.'

"Whether, on the supposition that the specimen was Mr. Addison's own (and it is not unworthy of him,) he chose to indulge the vanity of an author, by shewing how well he could have performed the whole, or whether (supposing it Mr. Tickell's, whom he loved and patronized with all the affection of a father,) he really meant to have conferred on him a pecuniary obligation by promoting a subscription for his Odyssey, as

* In the original manuscript of this character was inserted the following couplet:

Who, when two wits on rival themes contest,
Approves of both, but likes the worst the best,

Digitized by Google

he had before done * for Mr. Pope's Iliad, it must be acknowledged, that in either case the publication was indiscreet and ill-timed. It is true, that Mr. Pope's finances could not now be materially affected, had the public decided in favour of Tickell's translation; for his subscription was full, and his contract with Lintot was complete. But it certainly bore too much the appearance of rivalship and competition; and was, in either light, a weakness below Mr. Addison's station and character. It is not to be wondered at therefore, that a man of so irritable a disposition as Mr. Pope is acknowledged to have been, was hurt beyond measure by this transaction; and it is probable, that the character of Atticus was written in the heat of his resentment on this occasion, as he expressed the very same sentiments to Mr. Craggs in his letter of 15th July, 1715. But it does not appear (as Mr. Ruffhead asserts) that there was any open breach between Mr. Addison and Mr. Pope upon *this* occasion; and Pope expressly tells Craggs there was none. Had any such happened, and had Mr. Addison then shewn the temper ascribed to him by Mr. Pope's biographer, he would hardly, in the Freeholder of May 7, 1716, have bestowed such encomiums on Mr. Pope's translation of the Iliad.

* Ruffhead, p. 185.

Digitized by Google

"Upon the whole, however Mr. Pope may be excusable for penning such a character of his friend in the first transports of poetical indignation, it reflects no great honour on his feelings to have kept it in petto for six years, till after the death of Mr. Addison, and then to permit its publication (whether by recital or copy makes no material difference;)* and at length, at the distance of eighteen years, hand it down to posterity ingrafted into one of his capital productions. Nothing surely could justify so long and so deep a resentment, unless the story be true of the commerce between Addison and Gildon, which will require to be very fully proved before it can be believed of a gentleman who was so amiable in his moral character, and who (in his own case) had two years before expressly disapproved of a personal abuse upon Mr. Dennis. The person, indeed, from whom Mr. Pope is said to have received this anecdote, about the time of his writing the character (viz. about July, 1715,) was no other than the Earl of Warwick, son-in-law to Mr. Addison himself; and the something about Wycherley, (in which the story supposes that Addison hired Gildon to abuse Pope and his family) is explained by a note on the Dunciad, I. 296. to mean a pamphlet containing Mr. Wycher-

* Bishop Atterbury's Letter, 26th Feb. 1721-2.

Digitized by Google

ley's life. Now it happens that, in July, 1715, the Earl of Warwick (who died at the age of twenty-three, in August, 1721,) was only a boy of seventeen, and not likely to be entrusted with such a secret by a statesman between forty and fifty, with whom it does not appear he was any way connected or acquainted; * for Mr. Addison was not married to his mother the Countess of Warwick till the following year, 1716; nor could Gildon have been employed in July, 1715, to write Mr. Wycherley's life, who lived till the December following. As therefore so many inconsistencies are evident in the story itself, which never found its way into print till near sixty years after it is said to have happened, it will be no breach of charity to suppose that the whole of it was founded on some misapprehension in either Mr. Pope or the Earl; and unless better proof can be given, we shall readily acquit Mr. Addison of this the most odious part of the charge." †

Of this exculpatory essay it may justly be said, that it has succeeded in refuting every accusation

* The judge is in this particular mistaken, as we have already had proof that Addison was familiar with the Earl, and a near neighbour to the Countess, so early as in the year 1706.

† Biographia Britannica, vol. 1st, 2d edit, p. 56, 57, 58.

Digitized by Google

save one; that, for instance, which charges Mr. Addison with having executed this ill-timed version himself; a supposition which Sir William has left still involved in much mystery and uncertainty.

Since the period, however, when these observations were sent to the Biographia, namely, in 1778, a little further light has been thrown upon those *odd concurring circumstances* which induced Pope to suppose the translation the work of Addison.

In 1779, Johnson published his Lives of the Poets; and in his biography of Tickell, on mentioning Pope's opinion as to the author of this attempt, he literally transcribes the following passage from Spence's manuscript anecdotes, as containing the poet's reasons for his suspicion.

"There had been a coldness (said Mr. Pope) between Mr. Addison and me for some time; and we had not been in company together, for a good while, any where but at Button's coffee-house, where I used to see him almost every day. —On his meeting me there, one day in particular, he took me aside, and said he should be glad to dine with me at such a tavern, if I stayed till those people were gone (Budgell and Philips.) He went accordingly, and after dinner Mr. Addison said, 'That he had wanted for some time

to talk with me; that his friend Tickell had formerly, whilst at Oxford, translated the first book of the *Iliad;* that he designed to print it, and had desired him to look it over; that he must therefore beg that I would not desire him to look over my first book, because, if he did, it would have the air of double-dealing.' I assured him, that I did not at all take it ill of Mr. Tickell that he was going to publish his translation; that he certainly had as much right to translate any author as myself; and that publishing both was entering on a fair stage. I then added, that I would not desire him to look over my first book of the *Iliad*, because he had looked over Mr. Tickell's; but could wish to have the benefit of his observations on the second, which I had then finished, and which Mr. Tickell had not touched upon. Accordingly I sent him the second book the next morning, and Mr. Addison a few days after returned it, with very high commendations. Soon after it was generally known that Mr. Tickell was publishing the first book of the *Iliad*, I met Dr. Young in the street, and upon our falling into that subject, the Doctor expressed a great deal of surprise at Tickell's having had such a translation so long by him. He said, that it was inconceivable to him, and that there must be some mistake in the matter; that each used

Digitized by Google

to communicate to the other whatever verses they wrote, even to the least things; that Tickell could not have been busied in so long a work there, without his knowing something of the matter; and that he had never heard a single word on it till on this occasion. This surprise of Dr. Young, together with what Steele has said against Tickell in relation to this affair, make it highly probable, that there was some underhand dealing in that business; and indeed Tickell himself, who is a very fair worthy man, has since, in a manner, as good as owned it to me. When it was introduced into a conversation between Mr. Tickell and Mr. Pope by a third person, Tickell did not deny it; which, considering his honour and zeal for his departed friend, was the same as owning it."

There is no reason to suppose from this account of Pope, that Addison acted any other part than what he professed. He had, he acknowledged, seen and *looked over*, and therefore probably corrected and improved,* Tickell's version; and his readily owning these circumstances to Pope with a view to prevent any ap-

* Watts, the printer, declared that the copy of the translation of the first book of the Iliad was in Tickell's hand-writing, but much corrected and interlined by Addison.

Digitized by Google

pearance of double-dealing, as he expresses it, is a striking proof that he felt no impropriety or malevolence in his conduct towards the bard of Twickenham. Pope himself confesses the transaction, as described by Addison, to be fair and honourable, and yet shortly afterwards, merely because Dr. Young had not been consulted with regard to this version, and because Tickell, perhaps justly offended at the suspicions entertained, preserved a rigid silence, he accuses our author of underhand dealing, and of having himself translated what he wished should be ascribed to his friend.

It appears, however, from a late publication, that these were not *all* the circumstances which weighed with Pope in forming his opinion. Dr. Hurd, in his Discourse on the Life of Bishop Warburton, has given us an additional statement, and at the same time favoured us with his own ideas upon the evidence. Speaking of the *Advertisement* prefixed to Tickell's version, and which we have already transcribed in the preceding pages, he observes:

"To the words in this advertisement—*when I began this first book*—Mr. Pope affixes this note—*See the first line of the Dedication.*

"Turning to the dedication, we find it begins thus—'When I first entered upon this transla-

tion, I was ambitious of dedicating it to the late Lord Halifax——' over against which words is likewise entered, in Mr. Pope's hand, the following note, *The translator was first known to him* (Lord Halifax) *four months before his death. He died in May*, 1715.

"Now, from comparing these two notes together, one sees clearly how Mr. Pope reasoned on the matter. He concluded from Tickell's saying,—*when he first entered on this translation*, that is, *began this first book, he thought of dedicating his work to Lord Halifax*,——that he could not have entertained this thought, if he had not at that time been *known* to Lord Halifax. But it was certain, it seems, that Mr. Tickell was *first* known to that lord only *four months* before his death, in May, 1715; whence it seemed to follow, that *this first book* had been written within, or since that time.

"Admitting this conclusion to be rightly made by Mr. Pope, it must indeed be allowed, that he had much reason for his charge of insincerity on Mr. Addison, who, as a friend that had great influence with the translator, would not have advised, or even permitted, such a design to be entered upon and prosecuted by him at this juncture. But there seems not the least ground for such a conclusion. Lord Halifax was the great

Digitized by Google

patron of wits and poets: and if Tickell had formed his design of translating the Iliad long before Mr. Pope was known to have engaged in that work, he might very well be supposd to think of dedicating it to this Mecænas, as much a stranger as he then was to him. Nothing is more common than such intentions in literary men, although Mr. Pope might be disposed to conduct himself, in such a case, with more delicacy and dignity.

"I see then no reason to infer from the premises, that Mr. Tickell began *his first book* but four months before Lord Halifax's death. For any thing that appears to the contrary, he might have *begun*, or even *finished*, it four years before that event, and have only relinquished the thoughts of prosecuting his translation from the time that he *found this work had fallen*, as he says, *into an abler*, that is, Mr. Pope's *hand*.

"These passages, however, of the *Advertisement* and *Dedication*, reflected upon and compared together, furnished Mr. Pope, as I suppose, with the chief of those *odd concurring circumstances*, which, as we are told,* convinced him that this translation of the first book of the Iliad was published with Mr. Addison's participation, if not composed by him. If the work had been begun

* In the notes on the Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot.

Digitized by Google

but *four* months before its appearance, it must have been at least by his allowance and participation; if before that time, (Mr. Tickell's acquaintance with Lord Halifax not being of so early a date,) it was, most probably, his own composition. And to this latter opinion, it seems, Mr. Pope inclined."

That Addison did not discourage the publication of Tickell's translation, is evident from his manly avowal to Pope, who made no objection to the design. That it was begun, however, but *four* months before its appearance, there is not the least reason, as Dr. Hurd as fully proved, for supposing. The fact, when scrutinized, admits of a probable solution; for who can conceive Addison guilty of a deliberate lie! As our author affirmed to Pope, Tickell had sometime ago translated the first book at Oxford; not now willing, however, to interfere with Pope's Iliad, yet conscious of the merit of his own translation, and desirous both of attempting a version of the Odyssey, and of convincing the world that he could rival Mr. Pope, and, therefore, merited encouragement, he, with Mr. Addison's assistance, *who had taken care previously to inform Pope of the scheme,* published the first book of the Iliad, that the public might contrast it with Pope's version, and ascertain his ability to undertake the

Digitized by Google

Odyssey. That the world, however, might not suppose there was any sinister object in view, or any wish to injure Mr. Pope, the attempt was not made until his subscription was full, and his contract with the bookseller closed.

This statement appears to include the simple truth. Pope, however, highly provoked at the *time* chosen for this attempt, and willing out of revenge to fix upon Mr. Addison the stigma of jealousy and envy, became guilty of a gross piece of disingenuousness. In making his charge he totally omitted the advertisement, which, in the most unequivocal terms, points out the object of the translator—*to bespeak, if possible, the favour of the public to a translation of Homer's Odyssey.*

Mr. Addison, as Sir William Blackstone has observed, loved Tickell with the affection of a father; he declared, and I have no doubt thought, his friend's version equal, if not superior, to Pope's; he was also attentive to his pecuniary interest, and thought that nothing would better secure a subscription for his Odyssey than proving to the world, that, if he had chosen to come forward, he could have successfully contended with Mr. Pope in the Iliad.

In doing all this, especially as he had previously acquainted Mr. Pope with the design, (a circumstance unknown to Blackstone, I see

Digitized by Google

nothing which can convict Addison of an improper motive. We may suppose, indeed, (for where exists human nature without a frailty?) that, as he had taken much pains to correct and improve the translation of Tickell, he might indulge his vanity and ambition, so far as to wish, both for his own gratification as well as that of his friend, that it might be esteemed equal or superior to Pope's; a wish, which, as there was avowedly no intention of prosecuting this version of the Iliad, must be deemed perfectly venial.

Disappointment, however, followed the attempt; the public justly gave a preference to the Homer of Pope, and Tickell no longer thought of naturalizing the beauties of the Odyssey.

Notwithstanding this result, which proved fatal to his friend's project, Addison possessed too much candour, and a bosom too free from jealousy and envy, not to acknowledge publicly the great merit of Mr. Pope's translation. He has even gone further; and in the Freeholder for May 7, 1716, he has spoken of this beautiful poem in terms of the highest praise.

From what has been now brought forward, there can be, I should think, no doubt that the *only* blot which the enemies of Mr. Addison conceived themselves to have discovered in his

Digitized by Google

moral character, has been completely obliterated.

The literary and intellectual powers of our author forming the subject of the immediately succeeding essays, I shall close this sketch of his life and virtues with the following exquisite tribute to his memory, the production of his beloved friend Mr. Tickell. It may be termed, without dispute, one of the most affecting elegies in our language; and, what is still more exalted praise, worthy of the object it laments.

It is addressed to the Earl of Warwick, and was prefixed, by Tickell, to the quarto edition of his patron's works.

If dumb too long the drooping Muse hath stay'd,
And left her debt to ADDISON unpay'd,
Blame not her silence, WARWICK, but bemoan,
And judge, oh judge, my bosom by your own!
What mourner ever felt poetic fires!
Slow comes the verse that real woe inspires;
Grief unaffected suits but ill with art,
Or flowing numbers with a bleeding heart.

Can I forget the dismal night, that gave
My soul's best part for ever to the grave!
How silent did his old companions tread,
By midnight lamps, the mansions of the dead;
Through breathing statues, then unheeded things,
Through rows of warriors, and through walks of kings!
What awe did the slow solemn knell inspire,
The pealing organ, and the pausing choir!

Digitized by Google

The duties by the lawn-rob'd prelate pay'd,
And the last words, that dust to dust convey'd!
While speechless o'er thy closing grave we bend,
Accept these tears, thou dear departed friend!
Oh gone for ever! take this long adieu,
And sleep in peace with thy own Montagu.*

To strew fresh laurels let the task be mine,
A frequent pilgrim at thy sacred shrine,
Mine with true sighs thy absence to bemoan,
And grave with faithful epitaphs thy stone.
If e'er from me thy lov'd memorial part,
May shame afflict this alienated heart;
Of thee forgetful, if I form a song,
My lyre be broken, and untun'd my tongue;
My grief be doubled, from thy image free,
And mirth a torment, unchastis'd by thee.

Oft let me range the gloomy iles alone,
(Sad luxury! to vulgar minds unknown)
Along the walls where speaking marbles show
What worthies form the hallow'd mould below:
Proud names, who once the reins of empire held;
In arms who triumph'd, or in arts excell'd;
Chiefs, grac'd with scars, and prodigal of blood;
Stern patriots, who for sacred freedom stood;
Just men, by whom impartial laws were given,
And saints, who taught, and led the way to heaven.
Ne'er to these chambers, where the mighty rest,
Since their foundation, came a nobler guest;
Nor e'er was to the bowers of bliss convey'd
A fairer spirit, or more welcome shade.

* Earl of Halifax.

Digitized by Google

In what new region to the just assign'd,
What new employments please th' unbody'd mind?
A winged virtue, through th' ethereal sky,
From world to world unwearied does he fly,
Or curious trace the long laborious maze
Of heav'n's decrees, where wondering angels gaze?
Does he delight to hear bold seraphs tell
How MICHAEL battl'd, and the dragon fell?
Or mixt with milder cherubim, to glow
In hymns of love, not ill essay'd below?
Or dost thou warn poor mortals left behind,
A task well suited to thy gentle mind?
Oh, if sometimes thy spotless form descend,
To me thy aid, thou guardian genius, lend!
When rage misguides me, or when fear alarms,
When pain distresses, or when pleasure charms,
In silent whisp'rings purer thoughts impart,
And turn from ill a frail and feeble heart;
Lead through the paths thy virtue trod before,
Till bliss shall join, nor death can part us more.

That awful form (which so ye heavens decree,
Must still be lov'd and still deplor'd by me)
In nightly visions seldom fails to rise,
Or rous'd by fancy, meets my waking eyes.
If business calls, or crowded courts invite,
Th' unblemish'd statesman seems to strike my sight;
If on the stage I seek to sooth my care
I meet his soul which breathes in CATO there;
If pensive to the rural shades I rove,
His shape o'ertakes me in the lonely grove:
'Twas there of just and good he reason'd strong,
Clear'd some great truth, or rais'd some serious song;

Digitized by Google

There patient shew'd us the wise course to steer,
A candid censor, and a friend severe;
There taught us how to live; and (oh! too high
The price of knowledge) taught us how to die.

Thou hill whose brow the antique structures grace,
Rear'd by bold chiefs of WARWICK's noble race,
Why, once so lov'd, whene'er thy bower appears,
O'er my dim eye-balls glance these sudden tears!
How sweet were once thy prospects fresh and fair,
Thy sloping walks and unpolluted air!
How sweet the glooms beneath thy aged trees,
Thy noon-tide shadow, and thy evening breeze!
His image thy forsaken bowers restore;
Thy walks and airy prospects charm no more!
No more the summer in thy glooms allay'd,
Thy evening breezes, and thy noon-tide shade!

From other ills, however fortune frown'd,
Some refuge in the Muses' art I found;
Reluctant now I touch the trembling string,
Bereft of him who taught me how to sing:
And these sad accents, murmur'd o'er his urn,
Betray that absence, they attempt to mourn.
Oh! must I then (now fresh my bosom bleeds,
And Craggs in death to Addison succeeds)
The verse, begun to one lost friend, prolong,
And weep a second in th' unfinish'd song?

These works divine, which, on his death-bed laid,
To thee, O Craggs, th' expiring sage convey'd,
Great, but ill-omen'd monument of fame;
Nor he surviv'd to give, nor thou to claim.
Swift after him thy social spirit flies,
And close to his, how soon! thy coffin lies.

Digitized by Google

Blest pair! whose union future bards shall tell
In future tongues: each other's boast, farewell!
Farewell! whom, join'd in fame, in friendship try'd,
No chance could sever, nor the grave divide.*

* "Addison's works," says Atterbury, "came to my hands yesterday, October 15th, 1721. I cannot but think it a very odd set of incidents, that the book should be dedicated by a dead man to a dead man (Mr. Craggs;) and even that the new patron (Lord Warwick) to whom Tickell chose to inscribe his verses, should be dead also before they were published. Had I been in the editor's place, I should have been a little apprehensive for myself, under a thought that every one who had any hand in that work, was to die before the publication of it."

END OF VOL. I.

J. SEELEY, Printer,
Buckingham.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

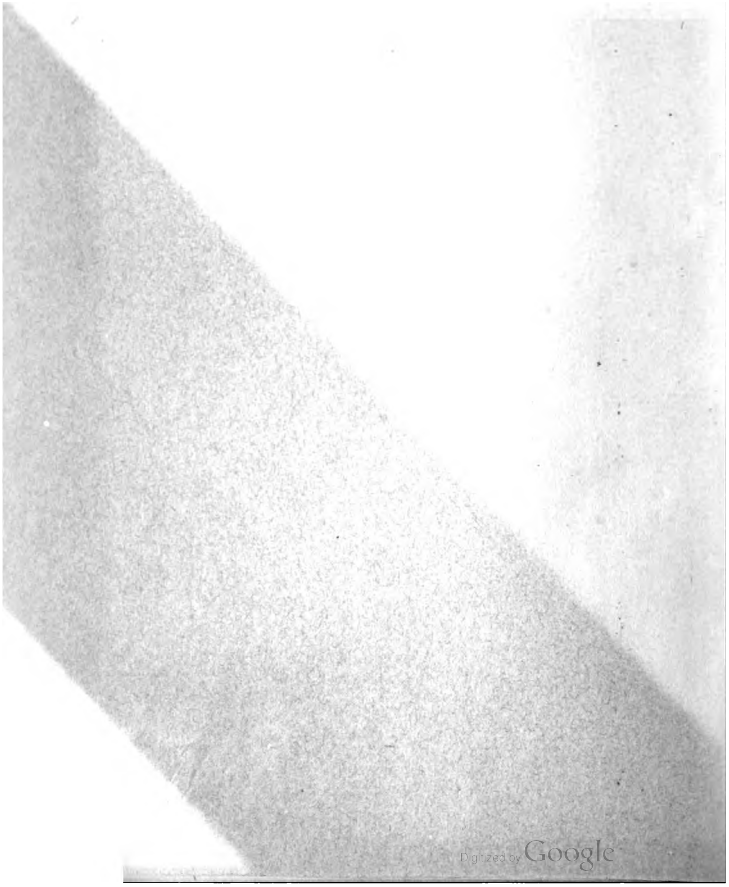
Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

DO NOT CIRCUL



Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google